

# The STORY of OLD IRONSIDES

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EMILIE BENSON KNIPE  
ALDEN ARTHUR KNIPE

*Foreword by*

REAR-ADMIRAL WILLIAM S. SIMS

# THE STORY OF OLD IRONSIDES

*The Cradle of the  
United States Navy*

By EMILIE BENSON KNIPE  
and ALDEN ARTHUR KNIPE

With illustrations in color and black and  
white by Mead Schaeffer

*Foreword by*  
REAR-ADMIRAL WILLIAM S. SIMS

EVERY American boy and  
proud of the name of "Old  
sides" and the wonderful record  
fine old ship in our country.  
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together as usual, relate  
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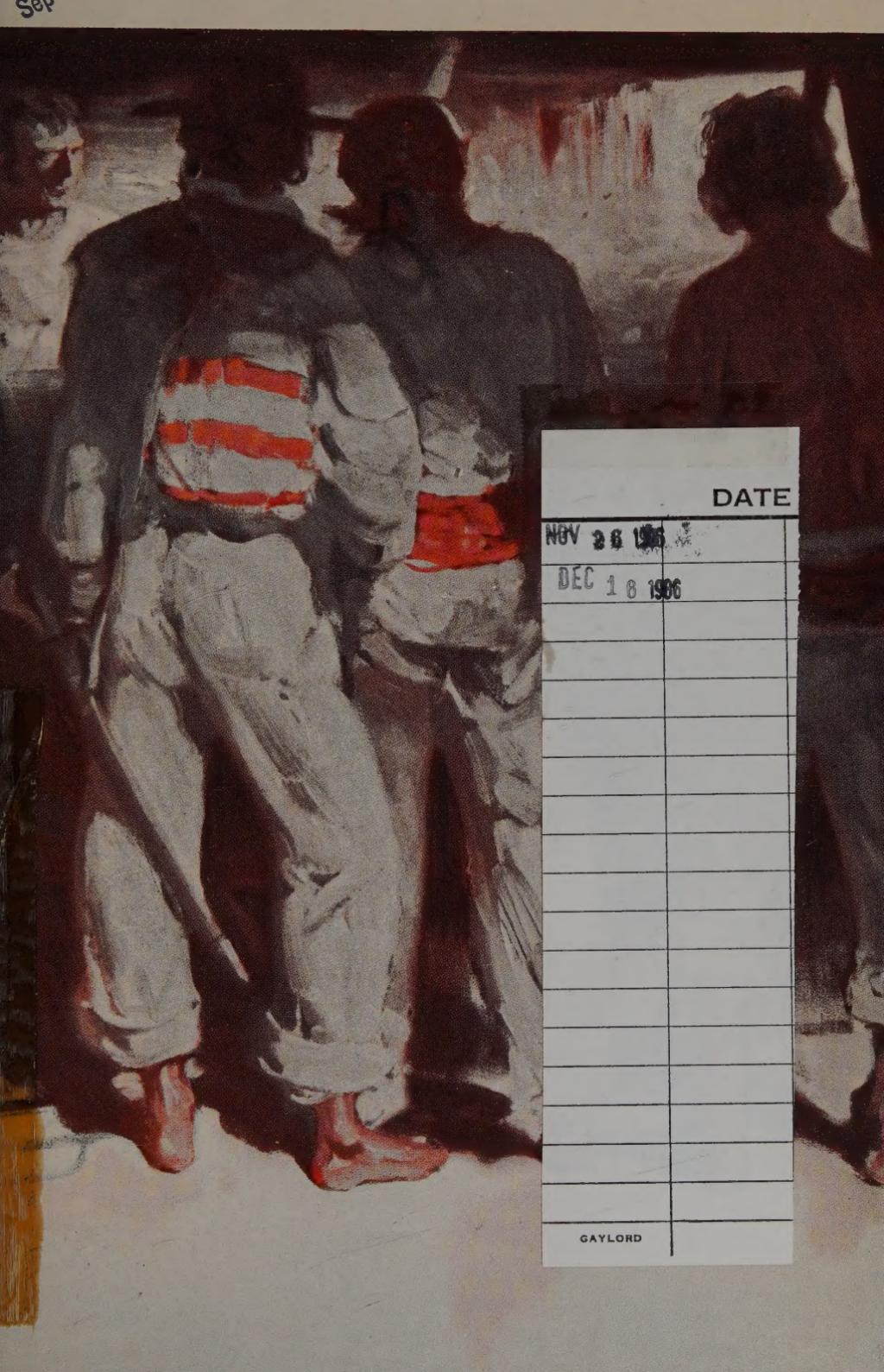
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an organization which is s  
out the book, a glorious  
inspires while it instructs  
heart of every reader  
pride.



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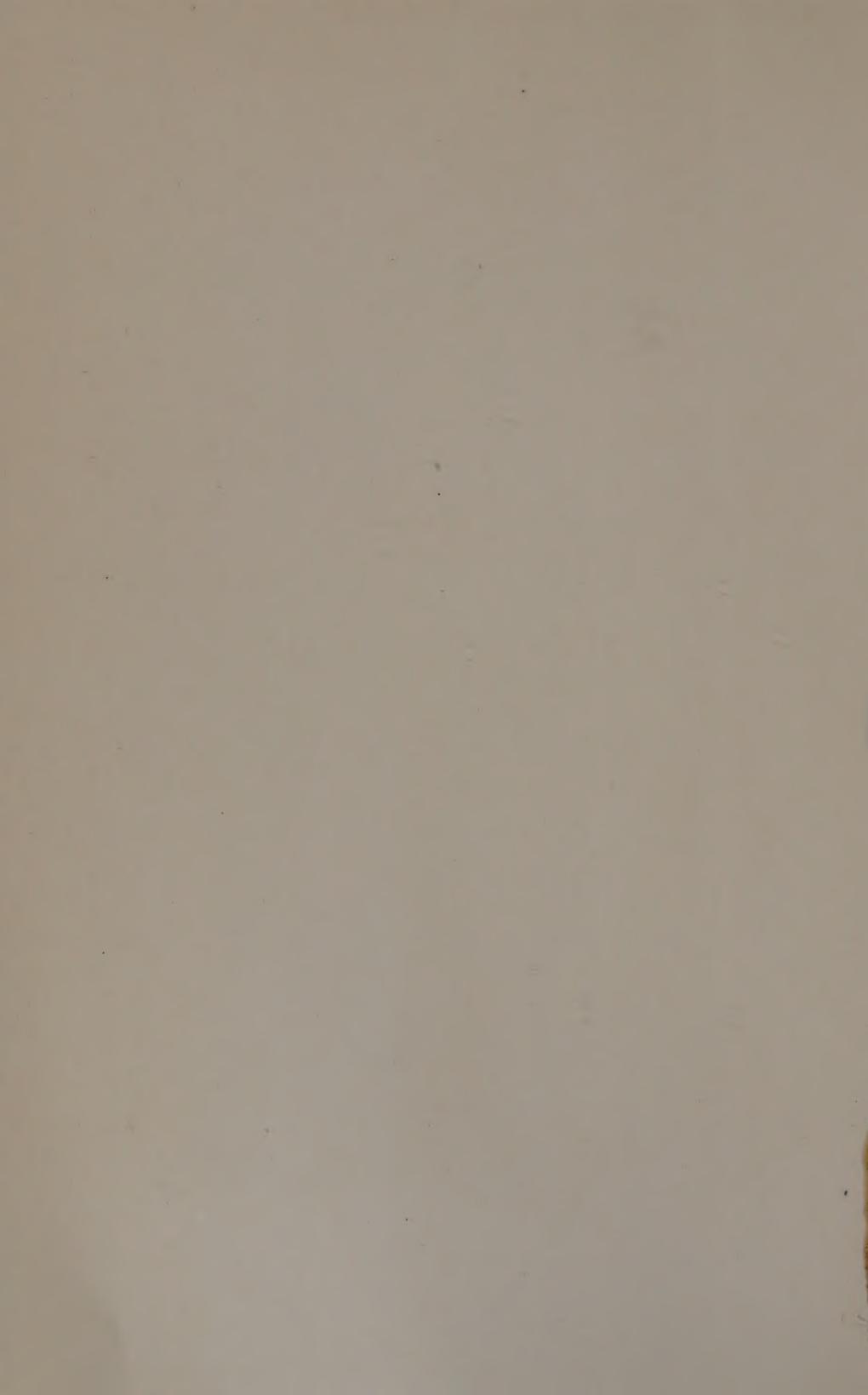


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THE STORY OF OLD IRONSIDES







IN THE MIDST OF SMOKE AND FLAME AND THE CLAMOROUS TUMULT OF AN  
INTENSE ACTION, "OLD IRONSIDES" WAS RECHRISTENED

# THE STORY OF OLD IRONSIDES

*The Cradle of the United States Navy*

BY  
EMILIE BENSON KNIPE  
AND  
ALDEN ARTHUR KNIPE

ILLUSTRATED BY  
MEAD SCHAEFFER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
REAR-ADMIRAL WILLIAM S. SIMS



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## FOREWORD

The story of Old Ironsides tells of the stirring events in which this fine old man-of-war took such a glorious part; the deeds of the splendid men who commanded her and the ships of her time. Young people can read the tale without being bothered to remember dates and other uninteresting matters, and I earnestly hope that they will read it—not as a lesson to be learned, but solely for the pleasure they will get from it. No fear that they will not be inspired by the patriotic spirit of the brave men who performed such noble deeds under the very heavy handicap of lack of proper preparation to meet the enemies of their country and defend our national honor.

Concerning this lack of preparation, the young reader will doubtless wonder why our people should have been so unwise as to neglect our naval defenses to such an extent that we were actually obliged to bribe the Barbary pirates to let our trading vessels alone. It was not because our naval officers of that day did not understand and insistently explain what was necessary to protect our trade and the honor of our flag, but because the people and the government did not understand, and therefore it was not until we were actually attacked and many of our ships were captured that the true American spirit finally expressed itself in the declaration: "Millions for defense but not one cent for tribute."

This story cannot fail to make clear to the youngest and the oldest reader the American naval spirit of patriotic de-

votion to the interests of our country that has resulted in so many glorious traditions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wm. S. Sims".

Rear-admiral U. S. N.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

In the midst of smoke and flame and the clamorous tumult of an intense action, "Old Ironsides" was rechristened . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
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They hustled their prisoners ashore, where they suffered for eighteen months . . . . .	106
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## THE STORY OF OLD IRONSIDES



## CHAPTER I

JOE SHEPARD sat in a wheeled chair regarding the plaster cast which encased his fractured ankle. He was a broad-shouldered, deep-chested young man with the unmistakable look of an athlete and it was easy to read his thoughts as he gave his head a disconsolate shake. Near a wide table stood his grandfather gazing down with an understanding expression on his fine, old face.

“Just how did it happen, Joe?” he asked.

“I was sliding for the home plate and the catcher blocked me off.”

“Too bad!”

“It was too bad,” Joe agreed. “We needed that run to tie the score.”

The older man nodded sympathetically.

“It’s upset your plans a bit, I take it?”

“Rather,” Joe admitted. “What worries me most is whether the blooming ankle will be fit next fall.”

“Football?”

Joe nodded.

“What does the doctor say?”

“He thinks it will be all right if I keep quiet.” Joe glanced at the plaster cast and gave a wry smile. “What do you suppose he expects me to do, train for the half mile?”

Mr. Shepard laughed outright. He quite appreciated his grandson’s ill humor over the accident.

"We shall have to find you a gentle, sedentary occupation," he remarked.

Joe looked up and noted a quizzical expression on the other's face. It set him wondering what thoughts were stirring behind the twinkling gray eyes. He had an enormous respect for the tall, upstanding old gentleman who, in spite of his years, was still active. During the war he had been "a dollar a year man" in Washington and Joe was constantly seeing his name in the newspapers as a member or chairman of committees controlling various enterprises. In consequence the younger man was somewhat in awe of his grandfather and when, after his accident, he had been invited to spend the weeks of his convalescence at Mr. Shepard's summer home, Joe hesitated about accepting. He was reluctant to impose his helplessness upon anyone. However, at his father's urging, he had agreed to go, and there he was, sitting in an invalid's chair with his injured leg sticking out in front of him, striving to resign himself to a succession of dull days.

Mr. Shepard had built his cottage on the sand dunes and through the wide windows there were views of the blue waters of the Atlantic sparkling in the warm sunshine. The room in which they sat was called the work-shop, but, except for a small lathe and a jig-saw in one corner, it had much more the aspect of a library. The four walls between the windows were filled with shelves crowded with volumes, and there was space at one end to hold charts and blue prints. It was here that Mr. Shepard spent his summers, busy with what he, and all who knew him, called his "hobby," the concrete evidences of which stood upon the tops of the bookcases. In an almost continuous row were

models of sailing craft; some gay with bright paint, others black, with the muzzles of tiny cannon peering out of the portholes. Most of them had their sails set, but a few stood under bare poles. They represented many sorts of vessels from the gold-trimmed Spanish galleons down to the small replica of a Tom's River catboat, which looked somewhat impertinent among the stately square-riggers.

Mr. Shepard had been building these models ever since his grandson could remember anything; although there had never been much talk about them in the past the younger man had heard his grandfather say that he did not intend to bore other people with his hobby; and Joe, whose interests centered on the athletic field, had taken only a passing interest in the ships. Now, however, since he was forced to curb his out-of-doors activities, he felt his curiosity stirred when his gaze fastened on a half-completed model standing on the work-table near his chair.

It was a man-of-war, for there were cannon showing through the upraised ports; and there was evidently much still to be done before the model was finished. Only her masts were set and these had not been rigged. Yet even without her top spars in place, she had the air of being ready to sail away through the many objects that littered the table. She stood up proudly amid the bits of shaped wood, balls of twine and tools of all sorts that surrounded her sturdy hull. Joe wheeled his chair a trifle nearer.

"That's the one I'm at work on now," remarked Mr. Shepard, noting Joe's dawning interest.

"She seems big," Joe commented.

"She was, for her rating," replied Mr. Shepard. "I've spent the last two summers on her and there is much to be

done yet. I doubt if I shall ever build another when she's finished. You see, I've had it in mind to make this model ever since I started tinkering with toy ships."

"Is she a special one?" asked Joe.

"Very special," was the answer, and the younger man caught a note of enthusiasm in Mr. Shepard's voice. "I've just been practising on the others," he went on with a nod toward the bookshelves. "This one I wanted exactly right. She is a model of the United States frigate *Constitution*."

"Oh, 'Old Ironsides!'" exclaimed Joe.

"Yes, and a fine old ship she was," Mr. Shepard said earnestly. "I've been wondering if you would help me finish her."

"Of course, I'd be glad to," Joe answered somewhat hesitatingly, as he looked down at the table. "But I shouldn't like to spoil her."

"I shan't let you do that," returned Mr. Shepard with a laugh. "Your job will be to lend a hand with the rigging and tie knots. There'll be thousands of those. Here, I'll show you."

They drew up to the table and, for a time, the talk was of ropes and braces, shrouds and stays, standing and running gear, all somewhat confusing to Joe at first.

"There's a lot to learn," he murmured.

"To be sure," replied his grandfather. "I've been studying this ship since you were a baby."

"Really!" exclaimed Joe. "All those years?"

"Yes—and very interesting years they've been," Mr. Shepard continued. "You see, when you decide to copy a historic ship, the first thing you know you're trying to find out all about her. I don't mean her construction only, but

about what she did, where she went, what sorts of chaps sailed in her and, if she is a war vessel, what her fighting record was. In this case there was an added incentive, for the *Constitution* helped to start the Navy and she's been watching it grow since 'way back in 1794. Even while we're talking here she's resting quietly in Boston. A long life and a noble one, Joe."

Mr. Shepard was silent for a moment, looking out of the window with a smile upon his lips. It was as if, in his mind's eye, he saw the famous frigate dancing on the blue waters, headed toward the horizon to carry the flag of a new republic to the ends of the earth and to make that starry flag respected.

Joe noted that into his grandfather's voice there had come a warm note as of affection, as if the old gentleman loved the old ship he had learned to know so well; and the younger man's mind was stirred with a curiosity to discover why an out-of-date sailing vessel should have made so deep an impression.

"Of course," he said, "I knew that 'Old Ironsides' was a real ship and all that; but I had no idea she helped to start the Navy. I had an impression that began in the Revolution."

"With John Paul Jones, eh?" said Mr. Shepard, nodding his white head. "It is an impression many people have, I fancy. They forget that you can't have a navy until you have a government. During the Revolution, and for some years afterward, we were just thirteen states, rather loosely banded together, which didn't trust one another any too well. In those days, while Mr. Washington was President, there were a lot of things that had to be done, before we

could even consider protecting our merchantmen on the high seas. As a matter of fact if it hadn't been for a band of earnest pirates and Napoleon Bonaparte we shouldn't have had a navy as soon as we did."

"Pirates!" murmured Joe. "That does sound interesting. I'd like to know about them."

"They were a merry lot of cut-throats who lived on the north shores of Africa, a region known as the Barbary Coast. Here, let's get a map." Mr. Shepard rose and going to a shelf returned to the table beside Joe. Opening the atlas to the page he wanted, the old gentleman pointed a slim finger as he talked. "Beginning here, at Tangier on the Atlantic side, we go around the corner through the Straits of Gibraltar until we come to Algiers. From there, around another corner, we strike Tunis and a bit farther down is Tripoli. Those are the towns to keep in mind. They were inhabited by Moors, Turks and Arabs, all Moslems ruled by the Sultan of Turkey, who lived in Constantinople. He appointed as governors of these various settlements, haughty and picturesque ruffians, called Deys or Bashaws, whose chief source of revenue came from robbing Christians. Ever heard of the corsairs?"

Mr. Shepard sat down and busied himself with the model of the *Constitution* as they talked.

"Yes," answered Joe, "I've heard of them, vaguely. I never knew exactly who they were."

"We think of them," Mr. Shepard went on, "as gay, romantic chaps flying about the Mediterranean in small, swift vessels with triangular sails and being very merry and adventurous. They wore turbans and flowing robes and brandished scimiters with the fierce abandon of primitive

heroes. As a matter of fact they were pirates who sailed the seas off their coast looking for any unprotected merchant vessels, which they seized gleefully. However, they were rather more clever than our favorite pirates. They didn't make the crews walk the plank and so end their usefulness. By no means! They took them ashore and made slaves of them. Then they notified the countries to which these captives belonged, offering to ransom them at so much a head. It was a very profitable business in which the rulers of the tribes shared the returns and gave it their protection as they might any legitimate trade. It was piracy on a business basis, and had been going on for some three hundred years; a subject for diplomatic negotiations, so well organized that those who wanted to carry on any sort of commerce in the Mediterranean paid tribute to these Barbary gentlemen as a matter of course.

"Now, as our country developed, American merchants were beginning to send ships all over the world. Trade was brisk and, naturally, we wanted to go into the Mediterranean ports of France, Italy and Greece, or anywhere else where we could exchange the things we had for things we wanted. Already we had encountered these pirates, for back in 1785 two vessels of ours had been captured by the Algerian corsairs and their crews were held in bondage. There were twenty-one American sailors to be ransomed and the Dey wanted nearly sixty thousand dollars to give them up. Sad to relate, our agents thought that was an extravagant figure, and for a time the negotiations languished.

"You mean we didn't pay?" exclaimed Joe.

"We did not," Mr. Shepard resumed. "For five years we kept haggling over the price, and then President Wash-

ington sent a special message to Congress setting forth what the Algerians were doing to our citizens and suggesting that we should act. The gentlemen of Congress talked on and off for two years more. Again Mr. Washington brought the affair to their attention, proposing, this time, that we make a treaty. His proposition was to pay twenty-five thousand dollars for the sake of immediate peace; forty thousand dollars for the release of the sailors and an annual tribute of twenty-five thousand dollars to keep the treaty going. This suggestion was accepted and Colonel David Humphreys, the American Minister at Lisbon, was appointed our agent to see it through."

"But," Joe broke in, "it seems dreadful that we should even think of doing a thing like that."

"What else could we do?" asked Mr. Shepard. "We couldn't leave those sailors to suffer in Algiers. We had no navy, you see. We were obliged to pay, or else keep our ships at home. Moreover, in all fairness to the Congress, it must be remembered that the European nations had established this method of dealing with these sea-robbers of the Barbary Coast through three hundred years of such negotiations. England alone might have assembled a fleet and put an end to the practice long ago. It was because of rivalry for trade among the Christian countries that this piracy had flourished. At the time we entered upon the scene, France, England, Spain, Holland and all the rest of the people who wanted to sail their ships into the Mediterranean, had made their treaties with the Dey and were paying, as we proposed to do, for having their flags respected.

"Meanwhile, as our commerce in those waters continued

to increase, we made an arrangement with Portugal, which was at war with Algiers, to convoy our ships to the various ports in that vicinity. The arrangement was entirely satisfactory to everyone except England, who had no liking for our growing trade and did not scruple to injure us in any way she could. It so happened that Portugal, tiring of the state of war with the Dey, asked the British Consul at Algiers to use his good offices to bring about a treaty of peace between them. This that clever gentleman did forthwith, but in so secret a fashion that the matter was all arranged before Portugal had an opportunity to warn us. It was a tricky business, deliberately designed to damage our merchant marine. You may be sure that no British trader shed tears when he heard of an American ship taken by the corsairs. It was an excellent way, they thought, of eliminating competition and had been a favorite method of theirs since the days of Sir Francis Drake.

“At the time this treaty was arranged, so hastily and secretly, a number of our merchantmen, expecting protection from Portugal, were sailing for Lisbon, when the corsairs, knowing that they would not be interfered with, swooped out into the Atlantic and seized eleven of them with one hundred and six men. A vessel flying a red and white striped flag with a constellation of stars on a blue field in one corner was a helpless victim. Whenever they saw these colors the corsairs laughed and licked their lips in joyful anticipation. They did not think we either could or would fight, and every sailor they picked up meant just one more man to do the dirty work in their dirty towns and, at the end, a considerable sum of money in ransom. Therefore they did not

even wait until we went into the Mediterranean but sailed out through the Straits of Gibraltar looking for us in the Atlantic.

"This was the state of affairs when Colonel Humphreys went to Algiers to arrange for a treaty on the terms Congress had provided. It was a fine bribe he was ready to offer; but the Dey would not even receive him. Instead that high-handed gentleman sent word that our Ambassador had better watch his step, as you young people say. He declared that if he were to make peace with everybody, there would be nothing for his dear corsairs to do and that, sooner or later, getting tired of a peaceful life, they would chop his head off for want of other ways to make an honest living. Possibly the old chap knew what he was talking about. At any rate Colonel Humphreys wrote to his government to the effect that if we were to maintain our commerce on the high seas we would need to create a navy to take care of it."

"Now, I see we're coming to the *Constitution*," said Joe.

"We're getting nearer," rejoined his grandfather with a smile, "but don't get excited. There was a lot of water to run under the bridge yet."

"Didn't President Washington do something?" asked Joe.

"He was always doing what he could," Mr. Shepard continued, "and in this case he backed Colonel Humphreys to the limit. In December, 1793, he sent a message to Congress telling them plainly that if Americans were to gain any respect as a nation they would have to let the rest of the world know that we would fight if we had to. In other words, that we must have a navy. Also he drew their atten-

tion to the fact that, so far as he could see, there was nothing to prevent the corsairs from carrying on their brisk trade right off the coasts of the United States. In addition President Washington sent to Congress a petition from the American slaves in Algiers setting forth, in detail, the sort of dreadful lives they were leading, and begging to be restored to their families. For which favor, they said pathetically, they 'would ever pray and be thankful.' A somewhat piteous appeal when you remember that some of these humble petitioners had been asking for relief for the last eight or nine years."

"Didn't that get their goat?" demanded Joe, evidently referring to Congress.

"It started them talking," returned Mr. Shepard with a smile. "They were all orators; but none of them wanted a navy. A small majority thought it would be a good idea to put an end to the piracy, although there was no great enthusiasm for any armed force. In fact it took great effort and endless delays before anything at all was done. Not until the spring of 1794 did Congress pass a bill appropriating seven hundred thousand dollars for the building of six frigates or, at the President's option, buying an equivalent force. The pay of the officers and crew was provided and a small sum set aside for the establishment of arsenals and armories. It was not, however, to be a navy."

"It was a start anyway," remarked Joe.

"Yes, but mostly on paper," replied Mr. Shepard. "This bill had a string attached to it. A very stout string, as it turned out, for there was a clause to the effect that should negotiations, which had been resumed with the Dey, lead to peace with these pirates, the work on these six vessels

should immediately cease. And that is just what happened. President Washington gave the order for the building of the *Constitution* and five other frigates. Then came word that the treaty had been made, and everything stopped. It was quite extraordinary when you think of it. We paid something like a million dollars to release those American sailors and pledged ourselves to an annual contribution in addition. Thus we made peace with the Algerian corsairs and halted the building of our own ships."

"My word!" exclaimed Joe. "Did we go on paying those robbers in the Mediterranean?"

"We did," answered Mr. Shepard. "We paid them enough to establish quite a sizeable Navy; but finally the people grew tired of that."

"Then we built the *Constitution*?"

"Oh no," replied Mr. Shepard, with a laugh. "She was built before that. We were driven into doing that by the French."

"Is that where Napoleon comes in?"

"Right there," answered Mr. Shepard, "but before we talk about that, suppose we have lunch."

## CHAPTER II

JOE and his grandfather did not go back to the work-shop that afternoon. Grandmother Shepard put a stop to that by insisting it was extremely stupid to spend a sunny day in-doors, especially for a young man with a broken leg. Therefore the two sat out on the broad porch overlooking the ocean.

“It doesn’t seem fair to take you away from your model,” said Joe, politely.

“Time enough for that,” replied Mr. Shepard. “It took a good while to finish the *Constitution* even after she was started.”

“You did say that Napoleon had something to do with it.”

“Yes,” Mr. Shepard went on, “he had something to do with it, indirectly, of course. You remember that the French had a revolution and the rest of her neighbors became mixed up with it in one way or another. Louis XVI and his pretty wife were beheaded and there was a general protest on the part of the European countries, which believed in Kings and nobles. They made combinations against France and it wasn’t very long before Austria, Spain, Great Britain, Holland and most everybody else was at war with her.”

“During these days we were having plenty of trouble getting things started, and we should have done well enough if we had been let alone. Although, officially, we were entirely friendly with all the foreign powers, there was an insistent demand that we should take sides in this universal

quarrel. The French were at great pains to point out that we owed them a large debt for their help in our war for Independence, which was quite true. Nevertheless we had made peace with King George, and many of our countrymen held an affection for the inhabitants of the land we had long called "the mother country." We were, you see, between two fires. Both France and England brought all the pressure they could bear to force us into their war.

"As you might expect the statesmen over here made a political issue of the matter and most prominent among these was Mr. Thomas Jefferson. He had been in Paris during a part of their revolution and had a great sympathy for a people who were trying to get rid of their King and to form a republic as we had done. He was entirely sincere in his belief that we should aid France and was not at all backward in saying what he thought."

"But we did owe France a lot," Joe put in.

"Indeed we did," agreed Mr. Shepard, heartily. "It would be hard to exaggerate our debt to them; still our gratitude should not be expected to include national suicide. That is exactly what would have happened if we had thrown in our fortunes with the French. England, seeing our increasing prosperity, was realizing what a fine colony had been lost to the British Crown and would have been glad of an excuse to get it back. She did not scruple to encourage discontent in America. She sent agents to whisper into the ears of the dissatisfied the suggestion that they would be much better off governed by a Parliament in England than by a ridiculous Congress which did little more than talk. This was a particularly effective argument among our trad-

ers, who would have been glad to see their ships under the protection of England's great Navy.

“Moreover we were not prepared for war with anybody. We were struggling to get our infant Republic upon its feet. We owed Europe a lot of money and we were extremely poor. The general conflict among the foreign powers was fast ruining our merchants and it was all that we could do, as a nation, to keep our heads above water.

“Realizing these conditions, President Washington declared the United States a neutral country. This was the wisest course open to us, in spite of the fact that it did not please Mr. Jefferson and his many followers.

“Because we had no way to enforce it, England and France, fighting desperately on the seas, ignored our neutrality and ridiculed our flag. Every so often one or other of them would seize an American merchantman on the flimsiest of excuses and do what they pleased with her. These incidents set Congress talking, and there were a few sensible gentlemen who remembered the six frigates we had started three years before to curb the Barbary pirates. They suggested that it was time to create a United States Navy so that the other nations would cease to treat us with such utter disregard. The Secretary of War made a report upon the condition of the six ships and begged that Congress appropriate money to finish them.

“These proposals met with scant enthusiasm. There were pacifists in Congress who contended loudly that we had no need of a navy and that it was the business of the merchants to look after their own vessels. They declared that it was not the function of a government to protect its citizens when

they went away from home. There are still people who think that way; but Mr. Washington did not share that view. Just as his second term was ending, he forced Congress to realize that if we were to command any respect at all from other nations we must be able to resent gross insults. He insisted that this controversy was concerned with a much more serious question than the safeguarding of merchantmen on the high seas. He reminded them that we had declared our neutrality in this war between England and France and that neither of them had shown the slightest regard for our flag. They had laughed at it and frequently shot at it, and Mr. Washington was at pains to explain that it was the government, representing all the people, which was being treated with contempt and that this was a much more vital matter than the preservation of our trade. He begged Congress to complete the frigates already started and let them sail into the Atlantic to show the world that we could fight for our national honor if we were obliged to."

"Well," exclaimed Joe, "I can see that at last we are going to finish the *Constitution*."

"Not yet," answered Mr. Shepard, shaking his head. "There was an election coming on, so everything stopped while Congress adjourned to tell the voters what they ought to do. It was a very bitter campaign between Mr. John Adams, who had been Vice President, and Mr. Jefferson, who had staked his chances upon the question of helping France. It was very close, for Mr. Adams won by only two votes in the Electoral College. He naturally continued Mr. Washington's policy of neutrality, which annoyed the French extremely. They had counted upon Mr. Jefferson's

election, had aided him in somewhat questionable ways; and when he lost, they showed their resentment immediately.

“Having started their Republic by chopping off innumerable innocent heads, the French people experimented with various ways of governing themselves and, at the time we are speaking of, they were ruled by an executive body called the Directory. It was composed of five extremely haughty gentlemen who seemed to have the idea that they held a mortgage on the rest of the world and treated it accordingly. This superior attitude on their part resulted from the exploits of the French Army under the command of a man from Corsica by the name of Napoleon Bonaparte. He had led his fighting men from one victory to another until the whole of Europe was more or less panic-stricken.

“So, with Napoleon to back them up, the Directory, feeling much annoyed because we did not elect a President to suit them, sent out a secret order to their naval officers and privateers to seize all the ships they could flying the Stars and Stripes. This was a serious matter for us. We had a great many merchantmen trading in the West Indies and very shortly after these instructions had been given, the French had captured hundreds of our vessels and taken them into French or Spanish ports, where the sailors were treated as badly as or worse than those who had been unlucky enough to be taken by the Algerian corsairs.

“These seizures stirred our people to angry protest, and their feelings were soon reflected by the gentlemen of Congress. They were sensitive to the reactions of the voters and promptly passed a bill for the completion of three of the six frigates started in 1794. It was a compromise measure,

of course, nevertheless the money was furnished to continue the construction of the *United States*, *Constellation* and *Constitution*."

"Ra! Ra! Ra!" cried Joe enthusiastically. "At last we are going to finish 'Old Ironsides!'"

"Don't get too excited," warned Mr. Shepard. "It is true that as a result of this action the *Constitution* was actually launched, but that didn't make her a fighting ship by a great deal. She was even less finished than our model. She was not equipped to sail out of the river, much less go into the ocean. She had no rigging, no spars, no guns. She was just a hull with three lower masts set, and in that condition she remained for eight long months because Congress had put aside no money for the things necessary to complete her. I suppose they thought they were being economical, or perhaps they believed that the people who were demanding that something be done would be satisfied if the three vessels were launched and not bother any more. At all events that is what happened."

"Of course," Mr. Shepard went on again after a moment's pause, "it is extremely difficult for us to realize the condition of our Republic in those days. We must make allowances and always keep in mind the fact that we were a poor, struggling country, which was most anxious to be let alone to work out its own salvation."

"We were not let alone as you know. The war in Europe had resolved itself into a struggle between France and England; for by this time Napoleon had conquered the rest of the nations opposed to him and was bending all his energies to the subjugation of Great Britain. And, like the usual innocent bystander, we suffered enormously. We could

not trade with either, because the British had declared all French ports blockaded and Napoleon had retaliated by closing all English ports. The British Naval officers, being short of men to work their ships, began to stop our merchantmen and take as many of the crews as they pleased, claiming them as subjects of King George because they spoke English. Whereupon the French announced that an American found upon a British ship would be hanged as a pirate. You can see that the life of our seaman, in those days, was not a happy one."

"I should say not," murmured Joe. "Didn't we do anything?"

"We tried to avoid war," Mr. Shepard continued. "We made a sort of treaty with England to observe our neutrality and President Adams hoped to arrange a similar agreement with France. To that end he appointed a commission to call upon the high-handed members of the Directory and see what could be done. Mr. John Marshall, who was later to be Chief Justice of the United States, and Mr. Elbridge Gerry were sent to join Mr. Charles C. Pinckney who was in London. These three proceeded to Paris seeking an audience with the gay and debonair gentlemen who ruled the French Republic. This happened at about the same time our ship, the *Constitution*, was being launched. In October, 1797, to be exact.

"Well, our commission did not have an audience with the Directory. Instead they saw Talleyrand, a very clever person who could dispense insults in a most ingratiating way. He happened to be Minister of Foreign Affairs at the moment, and he told our representatives that he was sorry but that the Directory were busy and hadn't time to bother with

Americans. However, an audience might be arranged if we would agree to loan France a considerable sum of money; to buy a number of Dutch bonds which had been stolen by the French; and—this is the meat of the nut—to hand over to the five honorable members of this sacred Directory for their private use, two hundred and forty thousand dollars."

"Bribery!" exploded Joe.

"Exactly," said Mr. Shepard, "and you will observe that this was to be the price for merely *seeing* these haughty gentlemen."

"What do you think of that?" murmured Joe.

"I can tell you what Mr. Pinckney thought of it," Mr. Shepard replied. "He was a Southerner and probably lost his temper. He remembered the American sailors suffering in the West Indies; the many insults the French had shown our flag; and he told Mr. Talleyrand just what he thought in terms that have become a byword with us. 'Millions for defense but not one cent for tribute!' And he meant it. Mr. Marshall was of the same way of thinking, and these two gentlemen quit France and returned to America with a report of exactly what had happened to the representatives of the United States Government.

"And, just to show how completely the French disregarded our neutrality, one of their privateers entered the harbor of Charleston and destroyed a British merchantman. This was bad enough, considering that our ports were supposed to be safe for everyone; but, to add insult to injury, this same privateer took two American ships on its way out to sea. To all intents and purposes, this was an act of war and, coupled with the report of Mr. Marshall and Mr. Pinckney of their treatment in Paris, caused our people

to grow angry once more and let Congress know that something must be done.

“However, to make war on France at that time did not seem a gay and lighthearted enterprise, I can tell you. Mr. Bonaparte was galloping about Europe, threatening everybody who did not say ‘Yes, sir’ and ‘No, sir’ to his orders and generally making his threats good. As you might expect, there was a peace-at-any-price party here at home who advocated our buying protection by paying tribute to the Directory, in spite of what Mr. Pinckney had said. They emphasized the risk we were running if we attempted to fight for our independence; and to be sure, the risks were real enough. Yet, in all fairness to that Congress, these pacifists were a small minority. Most members of it were brave and patriotic, although they *would* talk. They discussed the matter from November, 1797, until March, 1798, and then President Adams sent them a message telling them flatly that they must act and stop orating.

“And they did. Without further delay they voted to recruit an army of twenty thousand regular troops; made other provision for the employment of volunteers and militia and, what concerns us most, they actually started the United States Navy by creating for that branch of the service a Secretary who should be a member of the President’s Cabinet. Mr. Benjamin Stoddert was the first gentleman to assume that position. We may fairly say that here was the beginning of our Navy, yet it does seem rather curious that we were forced to take this action by the friends who had helped us gain our independence. Congress appropriated money to equip the three unfinished frigates. They provided for the pay of officers and men, and authorized the capture

of any French vessels found upon the high seas. Further than that we did not go. There was never any out and out declaration of war. Mr. Stoddert proceeded with his job of getting our three warships in shape to fight, and almost the entire country applauded the action of Congress.

"There seems no doubt that we went into this effort to protect ourselves very whole-heartedly as a nation. The gentlemen who had talked about paying tribute became silent when the fighting blood of the country was stirred. As might be expected in such an emergency, everyone was thinking of Mr. Washington, living quietly at Mount Vernon, and in July Mr. McHenry, our Secretary of War, went to see him with an appointment from the President to make him Commander in Chief of all our forces. Mr. Washington was sixty-six at the time, but that didn't stop him from heeding the call of his countrymen. He accepted the responsibility and so, under the command of the Father of our Country, the United States proceeded to get itself ready for a war with her old friends, the French. Our ships finally went to sea—but we'll talk about that tomorrow," Mr. Shepard ended abruptly.

"Oh, but, grandfather," Joe protested, "I want to know if—"

"There's plenty of time," Mr. Shepard told him with a chuckle. "It will be weeks before that leg of yours is healed. I must take you in before your grandmother scolds me for keeping an invalid out after the sun is down."

"I'm not really an invalid," Joe demurred.

"You're as helpless as one," his grandfather rejoined as he pushed the wheeled chair into the cottage.

## CHAPTER III

THEY were busy over the model and Joe, tying ratlines to the foremast shrouds, began to learn something of the way a ship was rigged. He found it interesting. It was rather fun to talk over the career of the *Constitution* while he seemed to be helping to make her ready for the sea.

"Grandfather," he began after a while, "I was thinking last night before I went to sleep, that 'Old Ironsides' must have seen a lot of changes in her time. Weren't they wearing knickerbockers when Mr. Washington ordered her started?"

"Indeed they were," replied Mr. Shepard, "and very handsome knickerbockers too, some of them. The gentlemen of those days dressed in silks and satins and fine laces. Perhaps we are coming back to that fashion, now that golf is so popular."

Joe laughed aloud as an idea popped into his head.

"Think of President Washington in plus fours!"

"It's an amusing suggestion," Mr. Shepard agreed with a chuckle, "but it isn't really so funny when you stop to think of it. I've a notion that Mr. Washington would have been a very enthusiastic golfer if they had been playing the game in this country in those days. He would probably, have laid out a course at Mount Vernon."

"He might have driven a car, too," Joe remarked somewhat soberly.

"Undoubtedly he would have," Mr. Shepard asserted. "And you may be quite sure it would have been a high-

powered machine. Possibly he would have had encounters with the traffic policemen. Certainly he would have wasted no time if he wanted to go somewhere."

"I never thought of George Washington like that," said Joe, in a somewhat awed tone.

"It isn't a bad way to think of him," Mr. Shepard went on. "He was entirely modern for his day. Quite up-to-date, as we say. It isn't so much that the people of his period were different as it is that our way of living is different. Railroads and steamships, radio and aeroplanes, telephones and all the conveniences electricity has given us; the thousands of inventions and discoveries which have occurred during the years, all these things have changed our ways of existence. This is a fact we must keep in mind while we talk of the *Constitution* and those who have to do with her, whether in Congress or on her decks; which, by the way, reminds me that we haven't said anything about how she was built or who did it."

"That would take us back to the time when President Washington told them to go ahead with the six frigates," said Joe.

"It wasn't quite as easy as that," replied Mr. Shepard. "When you start to build a house you don't just say 'go ahead,' do you?"

"No, I don't suppose you do."

"Hardly. You have to decide how many rooms you want; how many stories it is going to be and how much money you have to spend on it. With ships, it is much the same. There are lots of things to be taken into consideration before you order the lumber. If it is a house, you employ an architect. If it is a ship, you consult a designer; and it so

happened that we had an extremely good designer in America at the time we're talking of. He was a Quaker, by the name of Joshua Humphreys, who lived near Philadelphia, then the Capital of the United States. Ship building was his business and he had constructed a number of fighting craft during the Revolution. He was a far-sighted gentleman and a good patriot, so that long before Congress acted he had anticipated the fact that sooner or later we must have a navy. Already he had been discussing the matter with his friends, particularly with Mr. Robert Morris. There are letters of his which have been kept, showing that he had given a great deal of thought to the war vessels we should acquire and had come to definite conclusions.

“For instance, in considering his problem, he had to keep in mind what services would be required of such ships; where they would go; what sort of opposition they would meet; the depth of the water in our harbors and many, many other factors. Quite like determining the number and arrangement of the rooms in a house, only considerably more complicated. There were three principal types of war craft in those days. The largest ones were called ships-of-the-line, comparatively huge affairs with three or more decks bristling with guns. They were powerful fighters but rather slow and clumsy. The next size were the frigates, which were the cruisers. Fast sailing, armed vessels, quite capable of taking care of themselves and going off alone on errands of communication. ‘The eyes of the fleet,’ Lord Nelson called them, and their distinguishing characteristic was the fact that they carried guns on two decks. After them came sloops-of-war, smaller vessels of light draft with only one gun deck. These three classes were the men-of-

war, although brigs and schooners mounted guns and were frequently used as privateers.

"Now, with these three types in mind, Mr. Humphreys had to determine which sort would be the most useful for us, and, to settle that, he had to consider who were likely to be our enemies. At the moment the Dey of Algiers and his gay corsairs, you remember, were making the most trouble. That picturesque pirate had no line-of-battle-ships; but he did have a frigate or two, one of which we had sent him by way of tribute. Well then, if we were to fight him, we should send vessels capable of beating the best he had. Line-of-battle-ships could do that but they were expensive to build and to maintain, and were not particularly well fitted for service so far away from home.

"Being a wise gentleman, Mr. Humphreys did not confine his speculations wholly to conditions in the Mediterranean. He thought it highly probable that sooner or later we should be drawn into a war with either France or England. Here were other problems to be faced, coupled with the question of whether it was better to construct a number of small, weak ships, like sloops-of-war, or a few powerful ones.

"'We should build frigates!' was Mr. Humphrey's conclusion, and he wrote to Mr. Morris telling him why he thought so. These reasons were placed before Congress when the matter was under discussion, and it was because of these views that the six frigates were ordered and the money provided to build them.

"When it came to the actual designing, Mr. Humphreys thought more of a possible conflict with a European nation than he did of one with the Dey of Algiers. Having settled

upon frigates as the type, he was not satisfied to make them just as they did across the Atlantic. We were to have only six of them and they must be better vessels than any that had ever been constructed before, or they would very shortly disappear. In England the largest guns judged practical for frigates were those shooting a ball weighing eighteen pounds. They were considered the limit. Mr. Humphreys decided that he could build ships which would carry 24-pounders and not lose the fast sailing qualities essential to such vessels. This conclusion necessitated many changes in design and construction which had never before been tried, and it should be remembered to the credit of Mr. Humphreys and those associated with him, that they had the courage to put their convictions to the test in spite of contrary opinions held by experts abroad with long experience in naval affairs. It is quite an American characteristic to do something no other country has ever done before, and in this instance it had a far-reaching effect.

“If we were ship builders it would be very interesting to find out exactly how the *Constitution* differed from the English frigates of that year; but as we are just telling of her life it doesn’t seem to me that this is important.”

“Didn’t you have to know about that when you built the model?” Joe asked.

“All I had to know was how ‘Old Ironsides’ was built. That information I found in Mr. Humphreys’ own plans, which are still preserved. I didn’t have to make comparisons with other frigates, although there are many striking differences. For instance, she was about twenty feet longer and five feet wider than the usual British vessel. The shaping of her bows and sides was more graceful, ‘finer in line’ they

call it, which was following the French fashion in ship building. These things helped to make her sail faster, although she would be carrying a heavy armament. On the water-line she was one hundred and seventy-five feet long and her beam was forty-three feet, six inches. So much for actual dimensions. There were more important considerations to be thought of which had to do, particularly, with a fighting vessel.

“First of all let us say something of the decks of our old ship. As you look down on the model you see what was called the spar-deck. This is really the roof of the gun-deck where the main battery is located. The forecastle, where the sailors live, runs from the bow to a bit aft of the foremast. From the mainmast aft is the quarter-deck, where the officers stand; and in between is a space called the waist, where the life-boats, spars and extra rigging are stowed to be ready in case of an emergency. This is the characteristic arrangement aboard a frigate, which, as I said, carries guns on two decks.

“At first the *Constitution* was armed with ten long 12-pounders on her quarter-deck and twenty-eight 24-pounders on her gun-deck. All these guns, by the way, were cast in England and bore the letters G. R., the initials of King George. There were a number of changes in her batteries from time to time, which we can take note of when we come to them.

“One of the things we landsmen don’t realize is the difficulty of shooting cannon with any degree of accuracy on board a ship. Even in our modern steel vessels of today there is nearly always some motion; but on the comparatively small sailing craft there was a roll even in calm

weather, which greatly increased in a rough sea. This was another of Mr. Humphreys' problems and he designed the *Constitution* with the idea of making her as steady as possible. To that end he shaped her sides to bend in very sharply above the gun-deck, as you see here. This narrowed her spar-deck and brought the stays and shrouds, which support the masts, to a sharper angle at the top. This plan also helped her sailing qualities, because her canvas could be trimmed flatter when she was tacking and she could therefore point closer into the wind.

"This matter of providing a steady ship was of great importance. It was impossible to keep a vessel from rolling, but Mr. Humphreys thought it would make the motion more regular if he constructed the sides of the *Constitution* to 'tumble home,' as they termed that sharp bend in her sides." Mr. Shepard pointed to it with the tool he was using. "One other consideration is important in this connection. In a heavy sea a ship might roll so violently that her gun ports would go entirely under water and would therefore have to be kept closed. This would make it impossible to use her cannon, and there were times when the weather was so rough that a ship-of-the-line could not use the guns on her lower decks and, consequently, was no better than a frigate. Keeping this in mind, Mr. Humphreys saw to it that there should be plenty of room between the lower sills of the ports and the water-line, and made the distance from eight to ten feet, depending upon the sheer of her sides. This, too, was somewhat unusual and gave her an advantage in stormy weather. In these few particulars of which I have spoken lay the obvious differences in design which were incorporated in the *Constitution* and her sister ships.

These changes involved serious considerations of construction, which, generally speaking, was considerably sturdier than that of the ordinary vessels of her class."

Mr. Shepard paused, and Joe looked up from the table to note his grandfather eyeing him thoughtfully.

"I was just wondering if you were getting bored with these details," the older man asked.

"Not a bit. It seems to me the more I know about the old ship the better I like her."

"I found that to be true as I continued to study her."

"You must have had to know a lot. Is everything in the model just as it was on the original *Constitution*?"

"No, not everything. At first I thought it would be possible to make the model out of the same woods, mostly oak and pine. That was not practicable. So many small parts have to be fastened together that it is necessary to have a fine grained wood that will not split. I have used box, which is considered the best material. There is, by the way, in the cabin of the *Constitution*, a beautiful reproduction of the old ship that is made entirely of bone and well worth seeing."

Just here they were interrupted by the arrival of Grandmother Shepard who announced that lunch was ready and, somewhat reluctantly, Joe let his thoughts return to everyday affairs.

## CHAPTER IV

“I HOPE,” said Mrs. Shepard, at the table, “that your grandfather isn’t tiring you with his hobby.”

“Oh, not a bit,” declared Joe, earnestly. “He’s been awfully patient explaining things; and you know, Grandmother, the *Constitution* was a great old ship!”

“I suppose,” replied Mrs. Shepard, “that all young people like to hear about war and battles and things like that.”

“Oh, we haven’t come to battles yet!” exclaimed Mr. Shepard.

“We’re just building her,” Joe said, “and there’s still a lot I want to find out before she begins to fight. It ought to make it more interesting to know how—how she grew up,” he ended after a moment’s hesitation.

Some time later, as they sat on the porch, Mr. Shepard remarked to Joe that, in one way or another, “Old Ironsides” had experienced a good deal of trouble in “growing up.”

“I will say,” he went on, “that, once Congress had acted, the people who were entrusted with her building certainly meant to do their best, from Mr. Humphreys down to the apprentice boys who were learning their trades.

“You remember that the order for our six ships was given long before we even thought seriously of having a regular navy, so the whole matter was put into the hands of the Secretary of War, who was General Henry Knox. The first thing he did was to send Mr. John T. Morgan, a master shipwright, down South to select the lumber for the new

vessels. The specifications called for live oak, white oak, red cedar and hard pine; and don't forget that these timbers were not lying in some convenient yard. No, indeed! They were growing in the forest and had to be cut down. The stump of one of these trees is known as the 'Constitution Oak.'

"Then the metal parts had to be gotten ready and the copper for her hull. These were furnished by Paul Revere and—"

"Paul Revere!" exclaimed Joe. "The man who made the famous ride?"

"The very same man!"

"But I thought I remembered he made dishes and coffee-pots and things like that, out of silver."

"So he did," Mr. Shepard answered. "He made plenty of them, and they are very much treasured by those who are lucky enough to own specimens; but the men of those days didn't confine themselves to just one occupation, as they are apt to do now. Paul Revere knew a lot about many metals. He had a secret process for forging copper, and he could make heavy bolts and braces, as well as dainty tea-pots. He had a factory for casting bells, and altogether was a very enterprising citizen. So they gave him the contract to furnish the metal parts of the *Constitution*; and somehow, if I had my choice, I should rather own a copper spike out of 'Old Ironsides' than a piece of Revere silver."

"So should I!" declared Joe, promptly.

With a nod of approval Mr. Shepard went on.

"After having started the gathering together of the materials, General Knox had to decide where these ships were to be built. For various reasons he thought it wise to have

them set up in different places, and Boston was selected for the birth-place of the *Constitution*. It was a good selection, for all along the New England coast the people were busy catching fish and whales. Trade was growing and many vessels were needed. It is on record that as many as four hundred and fifty sailing craft, of one sort or another, might be counted in Boston harbor on one day, so that it was easy to find experienced men who could build our frigate, even though she was somewhat different.

“Then, too, there were a number of excellent ship yards in this town and the one owned by Edmund Hartt was selected. He was one of a family of builders and, as the Government had no station of its own, this place had long been known as ‘Hartt’s Naval Yard.’ The records are on hand to show who shaped the masts and spars, who cut the sails, who made the gun carriages and all the details connected with the construction of the *Constitution*. Her first figurehead was carved by the Messrs. Skillings of Boston, and was an image of Hercules with an uplifted club. A very menacing aspect it must have given our old frigate.

“There were, of course, a number of officers and others appointed to watch how the money was spent and to superintend the work generally. We need only concern ourselves with Colonel George Cleghorn, the naval constructor, and Captain Samuel Nicholson, who was detailed to the yard as inspector and who, by the way, was the vessel’s first commander. You can appreciate that it took considerable time to get all the materials together. As I said, the trees had to be selected, cut down and shipped to Boston by sea. At the time Congress passed the bill it is doubtful if the flax and hemp for her sails and ropes were even growing. The copper

and iron, perhaps, were not yet mined when the President signed the Act in March. Nevertheless by November of that year her white oak keel was laid and the work went merrily on."

Mr. Shepard was silent for a moment or two, looking, with half closed eyes, off into the horizon across the calm waters of the Atlantic.

"You know," he resumed presently, "I've often tried to picture to myself those busy days in Hartt's ship yard while 'Old Ironsides' was being built. The place wasn't anything like our modern plants, you may be sure. There weren't huge groups of buildings with tall cranes or great power houses with black chimneys sticking up into the sky. The men didn't come to work in droves to tend machines that turned out the same thing day after day. There weren't any trades-unions, and the ship herself wasn't so large that those who were setting her up couldn't see her grow under their hands. No, it must have been a rather intimate and family affair, because the men were all Americans with a newly acquired independence. Surely they felt that it was their own vessel they were at work upon, and they must have been particular about the materials that went into her. They wouldn't accept the first piece of wood out of the pile if it were defective, saying to themselves that it wasn't their business to select the lumber. By no means! They would tell the inspector, or the foreman of the gang exactly what they thought of the timbers or bolts or anything else that didn't seem right to them, and make no bones about it. Moreover they knew what they were talking about. They would be highly critical in their examination of the logs of live oak that came to them from Georgia or South Caro-

lina. You can imagine one of those chaps patting a huge tree trunk and saying to the man next him: 'Gar lad, there's a nice bit of wood to work!'

"Aye, Jack Morgan knows good stuff when he sees it," might be the answer, and together they would start shaping the great timber by hand, talking all the while of this or that. Kindly gossip about their neighbors; the state of the country or the latest news concerning the run of codfish off the Banks.

"And they didn't have to shout to each other above the roar of blast furnaces, the heavy pounding of forges or the nerve-wracking rattle of rivetting machines. The sounds in that yard were not the harsh clatter which comes from the impact of metal upon metal, but the gentler thuds and crisp noises made with adz and saw. Even though copper and iron played their part, much of the fastening was done with wooden pins called 'tree-nails,' long pieces of locust driven into bored holes, some fifty thousand of them all told.

"So the *Constitution* grew up in the open amid cheerful surroundings, cared for by friendly folk who had a personal stake in her career and who never forgot the hand they had taken in her rearing. Years afterward they talked about it to their children or possibly grandchildren and, pardonably, boasted a little of their share in her construction.

"Mind you, it was a new sort of ship they were making those days in Hartt's Naval Yard; larger for one thing and, in a good many ways, an experiment. Some of the men were, undoubtedly, frankly critical of Mr. Humphreys' design, predicting gloomily that her masts could not be properly stayed because her sides tumbled in too sharply above the main-deck. Others argued that she would be all right,

as her planking would be heavier; and pointed out the advantage gained in her sailing qualities. There must have been much talk back and forth. For we should not forget that these men were sailors as well as carpenters and knew what was to be expected of a vessel at sea.

“It must have been very different from the way such things are done today. I am sure the men did not pretend to work harder when Colonel Cleghorn or Captain Nicholson appeared upon the scene. It is much more probable that they were inclined to stop what they were doing in order to tell their bosses what they thought of the way things were going. And the bosses listened to these practical men. There were probably many consultations and the opinion of the man on the spot was given respectful attention. He knew from experience what was needed, and he would not have hesitated an instant about expressing his views to President Adams himself, had that gentleman happened along. They wanted the *Constitution* to be right, and if they thought they had an idea that would improve her, they spoke about it in a loud voice. They were citizens of a new republic; indeed a good many of them must have helped to gain that independence at the risk of their lives. Peace with England had been signed only eleven years before, and the patriotism bred of that conflict had by no means cooled.

“When the bolts and copper spikes arrived at the yard surely there was talk of Paul Revere, as they handled the metal he had wrought. ‘Still a spry old chap,’ one would say, which was undoubtedly true, though Revere was verging on sixty at the time. Another would mention meeting him, or he may have come to the yard himself, when his appearance would start reminiscences of Lexington and

Concord and the days of Mr. Hancock and the fiery Samuel Adams, who was shortly to become Governor of Massachusetts. Then, while the hands were busy, the conversation would turn to politics, because Mr. Adams was an ardent Republican who was loud in his demand for State Sovereignty as against the concentration of authority in the Federal Government, which was a doctrine advocated by Mr. Alexander Hamilton. In Hartt's ship yard few would be found to agree with Mr. Hamilton, although, for the sake of argument, there would be someone sure to proclaim himself a Federalist, so that a hot discussion could follow.

"And all the while the apprentice boys, busy with their tasks and not saying much, you may be sure, were listening eagerly to the grown-ups and having their political opinions formed while they learned to handle the tools of their trade. One of these apprentice boys was Isaac Harris. He was finding out how to shape masts and spars. Years later, when the *Constitution* needed refitting, this lad was the master in charge of the work.

"As I told you, the keel of 'Old Ironsides' was made of white oak; heavy, tough and elastic. Her frames were of live oak, that evergreen tree that they found in the South. It had been planned to make the beams of her spar-deck also of oak; but this was changed to pitch pine, possibly because Mr. Humphreys, wishing to set heavy cannon on the forecastle and quarter-deck, thought she might be top-heavy. However, what I started to tell you was a nice story of an incident that happened after her keel was finished and they were ready to set up her sides. Just how true the tale is I don't know. It will show how interested everyone was

in the success of the ship. It must have happened one day when Mr. Humphreys was in Boston and had brought his three daughters with him.

“Now they had just reached that point in construction where the first planks of the frigate’s sides were to be fastened to the keel. There had been a groove cut in the white oak timbers and the faces of the first row of planking had been shaped to fit this groove; a task that must be skilfully done so that when the joint was packed to make it watertight the surfaces would be wedged together and not apart. It was necessary that these garboard strakes, as the first side pieces are named, should be laid on a strip of cloth soaked with lead paint. Not just an ordinary strip of cloth. It must be *red* cloth, if the ship was to be a lucky one, and, when they came to doing it, there was none of that fortunate color to be had. There was plenty of black or blue or green cloth; but to use these would be flying in the face of all precedent. It must be red, and the only material available was in the cloaks of the three Humphreys girls. When they were told of the difficulty they did not hesitate a moment. They set to work at once to cut up their beautiful capes into strips which were laid in the keel of “Old Ironsides” to make sure that she would be a lucky ship. This is one of many anecdotes that are told about the frigate and, whether or not it actually happened, I like to think it is a true tale.”

“I don’t see why it shouldn’t be,” Joe observed. “I know girls who would have done that in a minute.”

“Of course you do,” said Mr. Shepard with a smile for his grandson’s vehemence. “The girls of this generation are not different from those of the old days. As I’ve said be-

fore, it isn't the people who have altered. Although fashions have changed, and the red cloaks of the Humphreys girls would probably be very much out of date now, our girls, and boys too, for that matter, are just as ready as they were then to serve their country. We proved that in the great war.

"But to get back to Hartt's ship yard. Along at the end of 1795, the *Constitution* was growing and the workmen were beginning to talk about what she was going to do when she sailed into the Mediterranean looking for Algerian pirates. 'She'll show 'em' they said and possibly a number of them planned to sail in her. Then, one morning, the bosses of the different gangs told their men that they could look out for other jobs.

"What for?" they demanded.

"We've signed a treaty with the corsairs and the work on the ships has been ordered stopped."

"I don't imagine the men cared especially about this sudden ending of their work. There were plenty of other ships building and they could easily find employment. I do think, however, that they wanted the country to have a few war vessels to protect the shipping, and they most certainly demanded to know why the building should have been started at all if it wasn't to be finished. A half-completed frigate was only a monument to wasted money, a spectacle which did not please these thrifty New Englanders. There were probably a good many Republicans who thoroughly believed in a representative government, who wished that Mr. Washington would take the matter into his own hands and have the vessels completed. The President, however, whether

he liked it or not, acted in accordance with the bill of Congress. Perhaps he told Mrs. Washington what he thought of it, though.

“As to that, of course, we know nothing. All we can do is to guess at the feelings of the people of those days. There were a few gentlemen who hoped that the building of these six ships would lead to the establishment of a United States Navy, and they must have been quite heart-sick at what had happened. They would rather have sailed in a few men-of-war down to the Barbary Coast to battle with the corsairs than to pay for peace, knowing that such an arrangement, at best, could only be a makeshift.

“Well then, the work on the *Constitution* was stopped at the end of 1795, and not until our old friends, the French, insisted upon disregarding our neutrality was it started again on three of the original frigates.

“In September, 1797, our ship was ready for her launching, and Colonel Cleghorn, who was still in charge of her construction, set a date for her to take the water.”

“That must have been a great day!”

“So everybody expected,” Mr. Shepard continued. “It was to be a holiday for all concerned, except perhaps for Colonel Cleghorn, who had the responsibility. He, I am certain, was somewhat anxious, for you must remember that these ships were larger than any previously undertaken in our yards and no one knew positively just how they would act when the moment came for them to slide down the ways. This launching of a vessel was a serious matter. Something might happen to the ship herself, and it was a generally accepted superstition that what occurred when she first took the water would have an influence upon her

career. Colonel Cleghorn looked up in his calendar to find out when the tides would be most favorable and decided upon the twentieth of September, an anniversary, it is said, of the day Columbus was cheered by a visit to the *Santa Maria* of a flock of birds from the new continent he was shortly to discover.

“Aware of the difficulties ahead of him, Colonel Cleghorn had gone to Philadelphia to see the launching of the *United States*. This had not been particularly successful. The ways had been built at too steep an angle, and the ship rushed into the water and injured her bottom. The Colonel, having this in mind, wisely lowered the pitch of his ways under the *Constitution*, hoping to guard against a similar accident.

“As the great day approached, all Boston became feverishly excited. On the Friday before there was a considerable ceremony in bringing the cables from the rope-walk to Hartt’s yard. About four hundred and ninety men carried these ropes on their shoulders, parading the street while bands played and American flags waved. Thousands of people began to assemble from the surrounding country and Colonel Cleghorn, fearing someone might be hurt, issued instructions through the newspapers warning the crowds not to go too near the edges of the wharves for fear of the great wave that would be made when the *Constitution* slid into the water. Sight-seeing craft were advised to stay far away from the immediate scene and every precaution was taken for the safety of the multitude.

“And at last the long anticipated hour arrived. President Adams was there with his staff of officers, brilliant in gold-laced uniforms. The Governor of Massachusetts and his

guard were on hand. All the notables of the country who could manage it were gathered together in Hartt's yard, while around them, perched upon every vantage point overlooking the scene, were throngs of excited people. Stationed along the ways were the workmen with heavy sledges, ready, at the signal, to knock away the wedges that held the ship; and on her deck was Captain Nicholson with his aides.

"It must have been quite a sight, for you may be sure our new flag was flying everywhere. There were speeches praising the enterprise of our country in erecting so magnificent a vessel, emphasizing the fact that the man who designed her was an American; that the men who built her were Americans and that the materials out of which she was constructed were American products. It was predicted that she would sail the seas to uphold the honor of our country and worthily fight the battle for national justice—a great deal of flowery oratory followed by shoutings, hand clapping, music and the booming of cannon.

"And they were quite right to make that day one to be remembered; for it was a great occasion. The crowds realized that here was concrete evidence of the birth of a navy; of a United States Navy whose ships must determine whether or not we were to take our place among the respected peoples of the world. Here was an answer to the sneers and insults which we had endured until our patience was exhausted. The new Republic had taken another step forward. Upon the decks of the *Constitution*, and her sister ships in this infant navy, would be fought another battle for independence. It was a small beginning to be sure, nevertheless we had found the courage to start and there was excuse in plenty for hopeful speeches and hearty cheers.

“Then, finally, when the last eulogy was uttered, Colonel Cleghorn gave the signal to his men, and in breathless silence, the crowd waited; listening to the thuds of sledges at work along the ways. At length these were stilled, and the *Constitution* moved slowly toward the river. She did not rush as had the *United States*. I fancy she stirred rather jerkily and, after going some twenty feet, stopped.

“You may imagine what poor Colonel Cleghorn was feeling. He tried to start her with heavy jack-screws and did everything else he could think of without avail. There she sat and nothing they did that day would budge her an inch.”

“It wasn’t her fault,” Joe burst out, coming to the old ship’s defense at a hint of criticism.

Mr. Shepard laughed aloud.

“It is extraordinary how soon one gets to thinking of ‘Old Ironsides’ as being really alive,” he remarked. “I’ve often speculated what she would have told them if she could have spoken. ‘Can’t you understand,’ she would have said, ‘that if you put all these great timbers into me I’m going to be mighty heavy?’ That is just what was the matter. The extension of the ways had been laid upon soft ground and when the weight of the ship rested upon them they settled until they were almost flat. Of course she could not slide, and everybody had to go home feeling disappointed. There were those who laughed good-naturedly over the failure, and others who blamed Colonel Cleghorn. There were, no doubt, many who, entirely ignorant of such matters, wanted to know why he didn’t do this or that instead of thus and so. As was to be expected, all the politicians who were against the government

hailed this opportunity to find fault, and the pacifists insisted that here was a warning for those who would rather go to war than make humiliating treaties at great expense. Some shook their heads and predicted disaster for so unlucky a ship; but, in general, the people and most of the newspapers commented sympathetically upon the incident.

“However, in spite of the futile effort to get the great ship into the water, Boston continued to make merry; and that night, at the Haymarket Theater, they played a piece called ‘The Launch, or Huzza for the Constitution!’ The house was packed. Discounting the prophets of gloom, the great majority were cheerful and awaited the next attempt with patience.

“That came two days later and ‘Old Ironsides’ moved a little farther, only to halt again. Colonel Cleghorn, fearing that she might injure herself, stopped trying that day and set himself to the task of making his next endeavor certain. This happened a month later and was entirely successful. At a few minutes past mid-day on October twenty-first, Captain James Seaver broke a bottle of fine Madeira wine over her bows and, amid cheers, she slid gracefully down the ways until she floated in the river.”

“Colonel Cleghorn must have breathed a sigh of relief,” murmured Joe.

“A deep one, I’m sure,” agreed Mr. Shepard; “but don’t forget, his troubles weren’t over yet. Congress hadn’t arranged for the money to equip the frigate, so she lay as she was until the following March without spars, sails, rigging, guns, or the thousand and one things required for a ship at sea. However, she was eventually made ready and there is only one more incident connected with this launch-

ing which should be mentioned. I can tell you that before we go into the house.

"This had to do with the raising of her flag. Captain Nicholson naturally wanted to do that himself. He thought it an honor, as it was. Therefore he left orders that no colors were to be hoisted until he came back from his breakfast. When he did return, a new flag with fifteen stripes was already flying, and the Captain was extremely angry; which did him no good. It was discovered later, probably because the man boasted of it, that one of the caulkers named Samuel Bentley had done the trick. It was rumored that the Captain was not popular with the workmen and that Bentley had taken this method to even an old score. So you see there are various ways of having your name remembered throughout the years, although it isn't likely that Sam thought of that when he hoisted the Stars and Stripes over the *Constitution* for the first time."

## CHAPTER V

“Now that we have reached the time when the *Constitution* was actually in the water,” Mr. Shepard began when he and Joe were alone again, “it might be a good idea to take a look at how our forefathers and foremothers acted in this near-war with France.

“You remember that we talked the other day of the wretched treatment our sailors were receiving in the French ports of the West Indies. This had stirred up the people, and Congress, to appease their protests, voted money to finish the *Constitution*, *United States* and *Constellation*, to a point where they could be launched. Then they rested, hoping perhaps that this would quiet the clamor. Apparently it did, until the news was received of how our representatives had been treated by the Directory in Paris. Once more our citizens grew angry, and this anger was fanned into a white heat by the action of that privateer I spoke of, which sneered at our neutrality and made prizes of two American ships. On this, the demand for action was repeated in no uncertain tones.

“Again Congress was forced to stop talking. From then on they discarded half measures and set to work in earnest. First of all they provided the money to equip the neglected frigates. In March, 1798, work on the fitting out of the *Constitution* was begun and went steadily ahead until she was ready for the sea. The *United States* and *Constellation* were also completed, and by July of that year, three of the six ships begun in 1794 to fight the Barbary pirates were

prepared to battle against the French, who were pirates also in their own way. Then one bill after another was passed in a desperate effort to get some sort of a fighting force to sea as quickly as possible. Orders were given to finish the *President*, *Chesapeake* and *Congress*, the other frigates started at the time our old ship's keel was laid. In addition six line-of-battle-ships were authorized, though unfortunately they were never even begun. President Adams was given permission to build, purchase or hire twelve vessels and in this way he acquired a number of merchantmen which were armed and taken into the service. A bill ordering the building of galleys and small boats was enacted in May. A month later the President was advised that he might accept craft offered by citizens, to be paid for in government bonds. The keels of two frigates and five sloops-of-war were laid under this arrangement, the money being provided by private subscription. Undoubtedly Congress meant business! By July the forces authorized consisted of frigates, sloops-of-war, galleys and revenue cutters; in all thirty cruisers. These, you understand, were provided for by law, not boats actually afloat. Nevertheless we did very well, for by the end of the year we had at sea twenty-three war craft of varied tonnage carrying, in all, four hundred and forty-six guns.

"The crowning achievement of Congress was, of course, the establishment of a United States Navy as a distinct branch of the National service. We ceased to have a general of the army looking after our ships and when in June, 1798, Mr. Stoddert assumed his duties as Secretary of the Navy, we, officially at least, began the organization of a marine force of which we have never ceased to be proud.

“You realize, I’m sure, that Congress did not display this unusual activity because of its own unaided wisdom. As nearly always happens in a Republic, the people anticipated the legislation which their representatives enacted, and, in this case, almost the entire country was feverishly anxious for success in this half-declared war with France. Once committed, they put forth a united effort to assemble their strength, and hoped that a zealous enthusiasm at the last moment would make up for time lost through neglect of preparation. Our new national baby, the Navy, was extremely popular. Many young sons of our socially elect were enrolled as midshipmen. Commanders of merchant vessels presented themselves eagerly and were given officers’ rank in the service. Sailors and gunners in plenty volunteered to man our ships, and every class of our people showed a thorough willingness to do their bit. The country, as a whole, displayed a fine spirit and a commendable desire to preserve its self-respect.

“This, then, was the state of affairs in our republic when on May 22d, 1798, a converted merchantman named the *Ganges* began a cruise under command of Captain Richard Dale. She was the first vessel in our organized navy to get to sea. A little later the *Delaware*, mounting twenty guns, went out into the ocean looking for French privateers and captured *le Croyable*, a 14-gun schooner. This was the first prize under our new régime. She was taken into the service, rechristened the *Retaliation* and given over to the command of Lieutenant William Bainbridge.

“Of our frigates, the *Constellation* set out early in June, and the *United States* began her career a month after. This

latter vessel was officered, on this expedition, by several gentlemen with whom we shall become quite well acquainted before your leg heals. Her commander was Captain Barry. Two of her lieutenants were James Barron and Charles Stewart. Among her midshipmen were Stephen Decatur and Richard Somers.

“And now for our old ship the *Constitution*. Let us see what was happening to her. She cleared for sea on July 22d, commanded by Captain Nicholson, and her third lieutenant was Isaac Hull. The first month was devoted to showing the crew their way about the ship. Then she was sent, in company with four revenue vessels, to join the squadron patrolling the Windward Islands. These revenue vessels were brigs, mounting from ten to fourteen guns, and one of them, the *Pickering* was commanded by Lieutenant Edward Preble. We are going to say a lot about that gentleman, so don’t forget that you have been introduced to him. This was, by the way, his first service in our regular navy.

“The record of the *Constitution* in this undeclared war we were having, is almost blank for lack of opportunity to show what she could do. At sea the French were having their hands full fighting the English fleet on the other side and sent very few warships to our coasts. Great Britain maintained a very considerable squadron over here, with bases in Canada and in the West Indies, so you see that a French vessel cruising in the western Atlantic was likely to have a good deal of trouble with two enemies to struggle against. However a large number of swift-sailing, light-draft privateers, which were able to elude the frigates of both nations, flew her flag. These legalized pirates caused much loss to

our commerce. It therefore became the duty of our navy to protect the trade routes. It was a highly important, though not very exciting service.

"In 1799 the *Constitution* returned to Boston where Captain Nicholson relinquished his command of her to Captain Silas Talbot, an interesting gentleman who apparently wasn't happy unless he was fighting for his country. Although he was a sailor by training, he had served as an officer in our army during the Revolution and had been promoted upon two occasions for bravery. In 1779 he had been made a captain in what we then called our navy, a force which practically disappeared when peace was made with England. The restless Captain Talbot next tried his hand at politics and was elected to Congress. Perhaps he felt that, as a member of that body, he might find an outlet for his fighting spirit even in peace time.

"Upon the outbreak of our conflict with France he quit debating and clamored for a ship. He was placed in command of the squadron on our San Domingo station, which gave him the rank of commodore; and, with the *Constitution* as his flag-ship, he sailed gaily south on the lookout for Frenchmen. Isaac Hull was still aboard and had been promoted to a first lieutenantcy.

"I don't think Commodore Talbot found this service as exciting as he would have liked. The *Constitution* cruised down along the coast of South America to Cayenne, the chief port of French Guiana. There she would take a look at the harbor, hoping that there might be an enemy ship waiting to come out and, not finding one, would turn around and sail north to San Domingo. She had extremely bad

luck for a long time, capturing only two prizes and never encountering a ship to fight. The privateers gave her a wide berth and, although the Commodore made his station quite safe for our traders, he had little chance to indulge his evident craving for excitement.

"There were, as you know, a number of British possessions down there in the Caribbean Sea and along the South American coast, protected by the British squadron. The two navies were virtually allies against the French, and the officers, meeting in various ports, were on fairly friendly terms. The English, to be sure, were rather scornful of our newly-organized sea forces. They had a poor opinion of our ships and doubted the abilities of our commanders. Nevertheless they showed a tolerantly aimable disposition toward our men, which was warmly reciprocated.

"Out of these amicable relations developed an incident which gave the *Constitution* an opportunity to prove whether or not Mr. Humphreys was correct in his theories. One day, while Commodore Talbot was cruising about looking for some sort of diversion, a British frigate was sighted, and in due time the two vessels stopped within hailing distance to exchange news. The Captain of the English ship was an acquaintance of our Commodore's and the former, expressing a curiosity about the new American frigates, was invited aboard 'Old Ironsides' to see for himself.

"Together the two captains inspected her and although the Englishman was entirely polite, he undoubtedly expressed the opinion generally held by his countrymen.

"'She's too heavily armed, Commodore,' he declared as he viewed the guns on her quarter-deck.

“‘That is yet to be proved,’ Talbot replied. ‘I haven’t had a chance to fight her, worse luck; but she can sail like a witch in spite of her 24-pounders.’

“Possibly the English officer laughed outright, although without offense, for the entire incident was conducted in the most friendly spirit; then, looking up and noting the great weight of her masts and spars, guessing at the unusual thickness of the timbers in her sides, and, remembering the contention of the experts that 18-pound cannon was the limit for frigates, he may have laughed again.

“‘With all the canvas you can spread, Commodore, this ship of yours may be able to sail like a witch with a gale behind her; but to windward—ha! My old tub, over there, will outpoint you in spite of the tricky way your sides tumble home.’

“Doubtless Commodore Talbot laughed, too, and the upshot of the matter was that they arranged a race, with a bet to make it interesting. The British frigate was returning from a visit to Madeira and the Captain had bought some choice wine in that port. He offered to wager a cask of this against an equivalent in money, and the offer was accepted with alacrity.

“The English ship had been at sea a good while, so, in order to make the test a fair one, ample time was given for her to make a port, refit and have her bottom scraped. A day was set for her return and Commodore Talbot saw his guest over the side.

“‘In three weeks then, sir?’ said the Englishman, as they bade each other good-by.

“‘Aye, in three weeks, Captain, and—ah—don’t forget and broach that cask in port.’”

“ ‘No fear of that, sir. I’ll be busy picking out things to spend your money on.’

“With some such friendly banter they parted, and the English frigate sailed away to make ready for the contest, while Commodore Talbot watched her with renewed interest.

“ ‘Can we beat her, Mr. Hull?’ he may have asked his first lieutenant, as together they hung over the bulwarks.

“ ‘Leave it to me, sir,’ was the likely reply, and he, too, probably laughed.

“Being second in command aboard the *Constitution*, it was Lieutenant Hull’s job to take direct charge of this contest, and a better man for the purpose could hardly have been found in our navy. He had been on the ship since the day she left Boston, a year or more before, and knew her from truck to keel. I am sure he trained the crew during those intervening weeks, as if they were preparing for a yacht race, and the men responded with a will. They had been told of the bet, of course, and were out to win the Commodore his cask of Madeira. That a contest was in sight was enough to stir their enthusiasm. Moreover, this race was a welcome break in the monotony of their peaceful days; for the crew, as well as Commodore Talbot, were greatly disappointed that no opportunity had come to them to fire off their 24-pounders at an enemy. I am inclined to think, however, that they had a great desire to prove the *Constitution* the better ship because they had grown fond of her. She was an American craft, with her record still to be made, and we may be certain that nothing was left undone to fit her for this test, even though it may have seemed a tame effort for a man-of-war.

"At any rate on the appointed day the English captain brought his frigate to the *rendezvous*, all spick and span for the trial. That he was confident of the outcome goes without saying; for he, too, was proud of his vessel. Possibly on this occasion, Commodore Talbot with one or two of his officers, paid a visit to the British ship where, over a friendly glass of wine, they arranged the conditions of the contest and like sportsmen wished each other the best of luck.

"It was to be an all day sail to windward, starting at dawn and ending with the boom of the sunset gun. Long before daylight Lieutenant Hull had his men at their stations, a-low and aloft; nor were the sailors the only ones awake. The gunners, the marines, the powder-boys, the cooks and carpenters, the entire personnel of the ship were on hand when the signal for the start was given. With an exchange of cheers, the white canvas was broken out, the yards laid flat and the race was on.

"I don't believe that Lieutenant Hull missed a trick in that contest. The vessels started, each intent to win and hold the weather gauge, the men hauling on the braces with the precision of machines. Not a second was lost as they swung the *Constitution* first to port and then to starboard, spilling the wind out of her sails at exactly the right moment, and bracing the yards smartly as they eased her from one tack into the other, so as not to check her speed. The entire ship's company were on deck, shifting from side to side as best suited her trim. With his eyes everywhere, Lieutenant Hull stood on the quarter-deck and shouted his orders. The slightest change in the direction of the wind he noted and took advantage of, aided by sailors who knew why the order was given. They appreciated his masterly sea-

manship and gloried in quickly and neatly doing their share of these manœuvres.

“It might be fun to speculate about this race, to talk of how first the British frigate gained, then how inch by inch our ship made up the loss. We might grow quite excited in describing how each clever trick in sailing was met by another equally clever, and how throughout that long day the ships fought it out nip and tuck, all alone upon those wide seas. And at the end, as the sun dropped low on the horizon, how the men worked feverishly to gain an advantage that would put them ahead when the gun was fired to signal the finish.

“That’s the way they might have done it for the moving pictures, only the camera man hadn’t been invented then. As a matter of fact there wasn’t any race at all. The *Constitution* walked away from her rival and, when the day was over, the English frigate was miles behind with only her topsails showing above the horizon.

“Both the ship herself and the man who sailed her won a long-lasting fame that day. The men who handled the ropes knew good seamanship when they saw it and, although Lieutenant Hull is not likely to have spared his crew, they developed a great admiration for him. Later when they were ashore again in America, they boasted of their first lieutenant, and the name of Hull grew to be very well known in the navy for that of a skilful skipper.

“This, of course, was not the end of the episode. When the *Constitution* returned to the starting point, there was the English Captain waiting in his gig, ready to board her with the cask of Madeira. He was a sportsman and without doubt toasted the *Constitution* and her commander as they dined

together in the cabin. Hull was there with lieutenants from the British frigates, when the cask was broached for the officers. Nor were the crews neglected. Extra grog must have been ordered for the forecastles. I like to think of that friendly scene in the cabin of the *Constitution* when these officers of the two navies wished each other success and prosperity. There were friendships made in this way which lasted through the years when we were at war with England, and there are few instances, even in the heat of conflict, when the officers on either side forgot the courtesies due to brave and gallant opponents. It is worth while, I think, to remember such an incident in the tale of our ship, just for the sake of emphasizing this fact. Even then the English as a nation were treating Americans rather badly, and had a lively contempt of our navy as a fighting force; but by and large, the individual contacts were friendly.

“You realize, I am sure, that the months were slipping past while the *Constitution* was patrolling the seas off the South American coast. She was doing no fighting, yet for all that, she was performing a much needed service simply by being there. Meanwhile the people at home were still at work improving our navy, which had grown until, in 1800, we had thirty-five cruisers in commission; and, although the *Constitution* was out of luck from Commodore Talbot’s point of view, many of our other vessels were busy picking up privateers and in general making it most uncomfortable for French ships in our western waters. In particular the *Constellation*, commanded by Commodore Truxton, made a fine record for herself. She was the flagship of the squadron patrolling the ocean between the Island of St. Kitts and Porto Rico. Early in February, 1799, she

captured a French frigate, *L'Insurgente* one of the fastest sailing craft afloat at that time. She was of about the same size as the *Constellation*, although she carried a few more guns and nearly a hundred more men. Her armament of 12-pounders, however, was much lighter than the 24-pounders Mr. Humphreys had put upon our frigates; and, after a gallant struggle, she was forced to lower her flag. This was a most popular victory among our people; and, without reckoning the difference in metal between the ships, they declared enthusiastically that our 38- had beaten a French 40-gun vessel and that therefore we had established our Navy as good or better than any in the world, ship for ship. It was a somewhat boastful conclusion and by no means proved; at the same time it increased the good-will of our citizens toward the new service and helped to ensure its permanency.

“A year later, almost to the day, the *Constellation*, alone off the island of Guadalupe fell in with *la Vengeance*, a large French frigate mounting fifty-two guns. A spirited engagement followed in which the *Constellation* had much the better of it. She would have made a prize of the Frenchman had not her mainmast been shot away at the very end of the fight, giving *la Vengeance* a chance to limp off. It was a brilliant and creditable engagement on our part, for in this case the weight of metal was clearly against us, as it should be noted that, since the battle with *l'Insurgente*, the *Constellation* had lightened her batteries considerably.

“These two engagements in which the *Constellation* won all the glory were the outstanding events of this so-called war. The French gave us no opportunity to prove our worth on equal terms relying almost entirely upon their privateers

to damage our shipping. In this they were unsuccessful, our navy having shown its value by making the trade routes to the West Indies entirely safe for our merchantmen.

“Commodore Truxton returned to America with the crippled *Constellation* and everybody made a great fuss over him. Congress solemnly gave him a gold medal, (which he had undoubtedly earned,) for ‘good conduct.’ What pleased him most, I’ve no doubt, was his appointment by the Secretary of the Navy to command the *President*, just completed. She was a 44-gun frigate, the last of the six George Washington had ordered built in 1794.

“A circumstance which is somewhat amusing to look back upon was the almost hysterical praise Commodore Truxton received from the English people for his victory over *l'Insurgente*. The merchants of London sent him a service of silver plate valued at three thousand dollars. The press lauded him to the skies and for a long time a popular song called ‘Truxton’s Victory’ was sung everywhere. Anything that the French might suffer was, of course, so much gain to the British in their struggle with Napoleon; still they expressed such complete scorn for all that had to do with our navy that this excessive praise for one of its officers seems a bit fantastic.

“I think that Commodore Talbot, when he heard of these exploits of the *Constellation* must have expressed himself forcibly to his first lieutenant.

“‘Truxton is having all the luck,’ we can imagine him growling. ‘Don’t think I’m envious, Mr. Hull; but what I want is action, sir, action! I wish the French would send one of their frigates over here.’

"‘I wish they would, sir,’ Hull would have answered prayerfully.

“Well, keep a sharp lookout. Something may turn up.”

“And sure enough, something did turn up. From some source or other Commodore Talbot learned the whereabouts of a French privateer called the *Sandwich*, formerly a British packet with a reputation for speed. She was lying in the harbor of Porto Plata, a small town on the coast of San Domingo. She was loading with coffee, meaning to run it to France, and our Commodore determined to get her.

“Now by all the rules which we ourselves were fighting to maintain, Commodore Talbot should not have undertaken this adventure in the way he did. Porto Plata was a Spanish harbor and Spain had declared her neutrality in this French-American conflict. The only excuse he had was the fact that the Dons were notoriously un-neutral. They gave the French every possible assistance against us, permitting their ports to be used freely in fitting out vessels, or as places of refuge when privateers were in danger of capture.

“His knowledge of this state of affairs irritated Commodore Talbot exceedingly. Also he longed for at least one opportunity to do something, and so decided to take a chance.

“On their way to Porto Plata he, with Lieutenant Hull and Captain Carmick who commanded the marines on board the *Constitution*, planned their attack. The Commodore wanted to run into the harbor with his frigate and blow up the land batteries under which the *Sandwich* was sure to be lying. This would have ensured the success of the enter-

prise and Commodore Talbot would have had a change to gratify his desire for excitement. Unfortunately for this scheme, Porto Plata was a small harbor in which a ship the size of the *Constitution* could not be manoeuvred with safety; and, reluctantly, they turned their thoughts to other methods.

“What they needed was a smaller vessel, when, almost providentially, they came upon the American sloop *Sally*. She was admirably suited for their purpose, for she had left Porto Plata only a few days earlier and was expected to return at any time. Her reappearance, therefore, would not cause any suspicion in the minds of the French on board the *Sandwich* or the Spanish authorities who commanded the shore defenses. Keeping this fact in mind, Commodore Talbot determined to man the *Sally* with a party of sailors and marines and send her boldly into Porto Plata, hoping to take the *Sandwich* before either the French or Spanish knew what was happening.

“I am sure Commodore Talbot would have liked to lead this adventure in person; his position as commodore, however, barred him from active participation in such an enterprise; so Lieutenant Hull was entrusted with the execution of these stratagems. Under him, Captain Carmick was to command a party of marines, and the duties of each group of the attacking party were carefully rehearsed under the supervision of the Commodore.

“They manned the *Sally* at sea, well out of sight of the land, and waved good-by to the *Constitution* as they headed the little sloop for Porto Plata. They planned to arrive about noon, counting upon their seeming innocence to avert suspicion, and when they approached the coast all except the

few men needed to work the vessel were sent below out of sight.

“As the sun was reaching its zenith, they arrived off the harbor and went straight in. The *Sandwich* lay under the guns of the fortifications, broadside to the entrance, with all her cannon shifted to command a ship approaching her. Had there been the slightest hesitation—had Lieutenant Hull or his men showed anything but the utmost coolness—had any unforeseen accident occurred that might have caused a doubt in the minds of those who must have watched her progress toward the shore, the little *Sally* and all her tensely expectant crew would assuredly have been blown out of the water.

“It took plenty of nerve to face complete destruction without a tremor. Lieutenant Hull steered the sloop directly for the *Sandwich*, ran alongside of her and dropped an anchor over the stern to keep the *Sally* from swinging away. At the instant of contact he led his men aboard the French craft before any warning could be given. At the same moment Captain Carmick and his marines leaped into the water, waded ashore and, before the Spaniards knew what was happening, had spiked the guns which might have been used against the party attacking the privateer. Meanwhile Lieutenant Hull had captured the *Sandwich* without the loss of a man and almost as quickly as it takes me to tell the tale.

“This, however, did not end the matter. The Americans determined to make a prize of the French craft in spite of the fact that all of her masts had been taken down. Ignoring the clamor on shore, they went to work and rigged her. By sundown she was sufficiently sparred to spread canvas enough to sail her out of Porto Plata to join the *Constitution* at sea.

“All together, it was a bold and gallant enterprise, well planned and faultlessly executed. Commodore Talbot wrote a glowing account of it to the Secretary of the Navy, giving due credit to his officers for their daring and coolness. Reading that report, one feels sure that he must have chuckled gleefully when from the quarter-deck of the *Constitution* he saw the *Sandwich* sailing toward him with the American flag at her peak.

“Unfortunately our Government had the last word in this affair. The Commodore had violated the neutrality of a friendly nation and so, quite rightly, the *Sandwich* was returned with apologies. What was worse, damages had to be paid, and the money due the crew of the *Constitution* for prizes they had taken was withheld for this purpose. So far as the men are concerned, this seems extremely hard luck, as they had only obeyed orders. I have found no record of what they said about it, which perhaps is just as well.

“The *Constitution* came back to Boston in August and the Secretary of the Navy was at pains to praise her fine work on the San Domingo station. Commodore Talbot, his officers and men were all complimented. Let us hope that it soothed their feelings over the loss of the prize money. Three months later the ship returned to patrol duty on her old station where nothing in particular happened. In March, 1801, she was ordered home after the conclusion of the peace with France. How that came about we shall discuss the next time we have a chance to talk.”

## CHAPTER VI

“SUPPOSE you take a look at this,” suggested Mr. Shepard. “I’ve a few letters that must be written.” He handed Joe an open book.

“History,” murmured the younger man.

Mr. Shepard nodded, smiling down.

“Not so keen for history?” he said, then went on, not waiting for an answer. “I don’t want to bore you with this tale of the *Constitution*. ”

“It’s a funny thing,” Joe rejoined thoughtfully, “I haven’t been bored, and yet I hate my history courses. Just talking about the old ship seems different somehow. Rather like telling a true story.”

“In a way every true story is history,” Mr. Shepard remarked, nodding his white head. “You found Colonel Lindbergh’s trip to Paris interesting, didn’t you?”

“I’ll say I did!” exclaimed Joe with marked enthusiasm. “He’s a wonder.”

“I dare say you haven’t realized that he was making history?”

“No, it hadn’t occurred to me; and yet, of course, he was; when you stop to think of it.”

“Exactly. It is stopping to think of true stories as histories that takes the pep out of them, as you would say. In the years to come a lot of boys at school are going to be bored at having to learn that a man called Lindbergh flew in a monoplane from New York to Paris all by himself in the year 1927. That won’t seem very extraordinary to them,

with passenger planes doing it every day. Many of them will have made the trip themselves and thought little about it. They will take flying for granted."

"Yes," agreed Joe, "I can see that. There will be a lot of chaps wondering what Lindbergh has to do with their young lives. They'll be studying about him because they have to. The trouble is that they won't know the circumstances leading to that flight. It'll be just a statement of fact, hooked up to a date they've got to learn."

"Quite right," said Mr. Shepard. "It is those circumstances we're trying to get a notion of while we talk about the *Constitution*. That's the reason we stray from the story now and then to see what the people of those days were thinking about. There were times in the life of our old ship which were just as exciting to the men and women of those early years as Lindbergh's flight was to us. There was such an instance when everyone thought she was lost; then perfect strangers talked excitedly to each other on the streets of Boston about her chances of her ever making port. One day she sailed into the harbor, and the whole city stopped work and cheered. They were just as wrought-up over the fate of 'Old Ironsides' as we were over what was happening to the 'Spirit of St. Louis' during those hours when it was crossing the Atlantic. Now while I'm writing letters, you read how we made peace with France, keeping in mind the fact that it was bound to have a decided effect upon, say, Commodore Talbot, or Lieutenant Hull or upon the old ship herself."

Joe Shepard found nothing complicated about the negotiations for the cessation of hostilities between America and France in this undeclared war of 1798. It all came about

through perfectly understandable reactions on the part of the Directory, whose arrogance had started the trouble. With Napoleon behind them, they felt entirely safe in telling the rest of mankind what it should or should not do. They liked the job, and would have been content to go on for a number of years making it unpleasant for the world at large. It was Napoleon himself who upset their apple cart. He had plans of his own, and one day he quitted Europe with an army on board a considerable fleet of fighting ships, and disappeared. Some time later he turned up at Malta prepared to invade Egypt, with Palestine and Jerusalem as the ultimate objectives of his expedition.

There has been a question as to whether he was entirely single-minded in his ambition to conquer the Holy Land, and it has been suspected that his thoughts were centered upon what was happening in Paris rather than what might happen in Jerusalem. However that may be, he carried on a somewhat disastrous campaign in Egypt. Great Britain saw in this move a threat against India, and spared no pains to thwart it. They assisted the Turks, who halted Napoleon's advance, while Lord Nelson destroyed the French fleet in the Battle of the Nile.

Meanwhile the Directory was not getting along so well. It had been just as dictatorial with the French people as with everybody else and its popularity was fast waning. Moreover there had come a pause in the victories of the armies of France. In Italy they had been getting the worst of it and Napoleon's forces in Egypt were cut off by Lord Nelson's fleet. Added to this, the Americans, under command of General Washington, were extremely busy and fast making the West Indies most unsafe for French ships in those waters.

As a result of these conditions the citizens of the French Republic grew more and more discontented. Looking about for a scapegoat, they decided that all their troubles were due to the stupidities of the Directory. That august body began to take serious thought upon their situation, and one of their first moves to regain their lost prestige was to tell Talleyrand that if another delegation came over to Paris from the United States they would be very glad to see it and there would be no charge for admission. President Adams was at once informed of this and, being anxious for peace with our old friends the French people, appointed a commission to fix the matter up. When these three gentlemen arrived on the other side they discovered that a very considerable alteration had taken place in the government of France. Napoleon's brothers had remained in Paris to watch what went on and, noting the growing unpopularity of the Directory, concluded that the people were tired of their last experiment in forms of government. A change seemed highly probable and Lucien Bonaparte sent a message to Egypt telling the General what was happening. Napoleon, not without some difficulty in evading the English ships, turned up in Paris ready to take a hand in any upheaval that might occur. With the military forces of Paris fanatically devoted to their "little General" the Bonaparte brothers proceeded to play a few political tricks and, although the people declared emphatically that they would not tolerate a dictator and talked a great deal of what they would and would not have, they woke up one fine morning to discover that Napoleon Bonaparte had been appointed by their representatives to be First Consul of France for the rest of his life. This meant that whether they liked it or not the French had a ruler who

would not put up with the sort of revolution that had ended the lives of Louis XVI and his Queen, together with those of a great many other worthy individuals. This was an imperious gentleman, with a perfect understanding of how to deal with mobs. The people of Paris knew quite well, from experience, that if they didn't do as they were told the soldiers, wholly loyal to Napoleon, would shoot them down without mercy. They accepted their First Consul and tried to pretend that he wasn't a king.

"Well, how are you coming on?" asked Mr. Shepard. The business letters were finished and he sat down at the work table, busying himself immediately with the ship model.

"Napoleon has just told the French people where they get off," replied Joe. "Our peace makers have arrived in Paris and I suppose they fixed it up with the First Consul."

"With no trouble at all," said Mr. Shepard. "He was much too sensible a person to waste his resources carrying on a silly conflict with us. He was quite aware that he would have plenty to do on his own side of the Atlantic; so Talleyrand was ordered to settle the matter. You will observe that this clever Frenchman was still in office, ready to serve a new master as faithfully as he had served the Directory; always provided that nothing interfered with his own ambitions. He received our envoys most cordially.

"It seems to have taken a good deal of talking to come to an agreement, for it was not until the end of September, 1800, that the Convention was signed. However, it was a highly satisfactory document, and one important decision was arrived at. France and the United States declared that 'free ships should make free goods,' meaning thereby that

even if France and England should be at war with each other we had a perfect right to carry on our trade with either of them without interference. Great Britain denied this right to a peaceful country, insisting that so long as she was at war she wouldn't let anyone trade with her enemy. We shall have more to say of this when we come to 1812. Just at present we might note the fact that Talleyrand, in making this agreement, was aiming a blow at England and sowing seeds of trouble for us.

"Yes, I can see that all right," remarked Joe. "England's navy was strong enough to blockade the French ports, and it would be up to us to fight for our free goods and our free ships."

"Precisely, but we won't discuss that yet. We must take a look at our navy and see what happened when we made this peace with France. That will bring us to the end of 1800. Meanwhile, on December 13th of the previous year, General Washington had died rather suddenly. He was a fine gentleman and of all the many things he was concerned with I like best to remember that he signed the bill which started the building of the *Constitution*."

"I wonder how much he thought about her?" Joe asked as his grandfather paused.

"I don't know whether he ever saw her," Mr. Shepard remarked musingly. "He was anxious to develop a navy, and visited the *United States* several times while she was being built at Philadelphia. However, if he had known that 'Old Ironsides' was going to last all these years I'm inclined to think he would have taken a holiday and gone to Boston to have a look at her. At any rate, I feel that the old ship is a link between us and Mr. Washington. Certainly she

is a link between us and the days in which he lived. Which isn't telling her story, and we must get on with it.

“Another event we should take note of. The Capital had been moved from Philadelphia to the new city of Washington in the District of Columbia. When we talk of Congress hereafter we must picture its members in a very raw and uncomfortable town where there were as yet scarcely any accommodations for the legislators. The beautiful city we know today existed only on the plans of a Frenchman, Colonel L'Enfant, who conceived them.

“In March, 1801, Thomas Jefferson was made President and began a somewhat notable administration. While he was in office the country prospered amazingly. Our chief interest is his treatment of the Navy.

“During the end of Mr. Adams's term we were at peace with the world, and Congress passed a law giving the President power to do more or less as he pleased with our ships, except thirteen frigates which were specifically named. The rest of the thirty-five vessels we had in commission were to be disposed of as the Chief Executive saw fit. Mr. Jefferson promptly got rid of them and, in the main, it was a wise thing for him to do. Many of them were converted merchantmen, not particularly suited for war purposes and much more useful in the service for which they had been built. Included in this law was a provision reducing the number of officers in our Navy to what they called a ‘peace footing,’ and this was by no means a wise measure. The commissioned personnel was reduced to nine captains, thirty-six lieutenants and one hundred and fifty midshipmen. So far as its immediate effect was concerned there was no great harm done. It rid the service of many officers who had been

brought into the navy during an emergency and whose training had not especially fitted them for the duty. The great defect of the provision was limiting the number of high officers, for you can see for yourself that it is much easier to build a ship than it is to train a captain to command it.

“It does no good to speculate about that at this late date. Congress had passed the law and there it was when Mr. Jefferson took office. He made no bones about what he meant to do, and one of his avowed intentions was to get rid of the office holders under his predecessor and give their positions to members of his own party. ‘To the victors belong the spoils’ was the doctrine he proclaimed loudly; and when our naval officers considered their chances of being retained on this basis, they had many anxious hours of speculation before the lists were made public.

“Now for all his criticisms of the party to which he was opposed, Mr. Jefferson discovered that a president, to a great extent, is forced to act in much the same way as did his predecessor. In the majority of decisions that a government must arrive at, there is usually an obviously right one, no matter which party is in power. Mr. Jefferson’s delicate duty of selecting the officers to be retained in our Navy was governed not at all by selfish considerations. He forgot about the victors and the spoils, and named those he thought best fitted for the positions, as any other good patriot would have done. When the choice was finally made, our commanders breathed a sigh of relief and took stock of where they stood. For one thing they could be most thankful. The Navy had not been utterly wiped out as some vociferous citizens had clamored that it must

be. The men retained were the best in the service, and, although they had only thirteen ships left, these formed a nucleus which needed only a complement of light cruisers to remake it into a formidable fighting force. Better than these considerations was the fact that, in spite of peace, our Government meant to hold on to this newly created Navy. The gallant little band of gentlemen who composed its personnel settled down to develop it with the zeal of loyal officers attached to a permanent profession to which they might devote their lives. They were ably supported by a new Secretary, Mr. Robert Smith of Maryland, who gave to the Navy nine years of devoted service."

"It seems to me," remarked Joe, "that this is where the Navy really begins."

"I see what's in your mind," responded Mr. Shepard. "Our Navy might have disappeared as it did after the Revolution. That's true. Still it *had* been begun. It would be fair to say, however, that this was the period when its permanency was definitely established."

"What happened to the officers we've been talking about?"

"They were all retained, as I remember, except Commodore Talbot. He very handsomely resigned to make room for a younger man. Edward Preble and William Bainbridge were promoted to captaincies and many of the midshipmen who started in on the *Constitution* and the other ships of her time were now lieutenants. One and all, they were keen for the service; and, when the chance came, it was discovered that the great majority of them knew what was expected of an officer in the United States Navy, and did it with courage and efficiency.

“And just to show our peace-loving citizens that there were still troublesome spots in this best of all worlds, the Barbary pirates began to grow restive. You remember that we had been very careful not to hurt the feelings of the Dey of Algiers, a sensitive corsair with an enormous regard for his own importance? We had agreed to pay him handsomely not to steal our ships or make slaves of our sailors. For one reason or another we had been slow in forwarding these payments and the royal gentleman in the turban growled about it. These mutterings of discontent reached the ears of our Congressmen and they decided that the Dey must be placated. To that end, in addition to humble expressions of regret, we sent the frigate *Crescent*, valued at three hundred thousand dollars or more, as a present to the Algerian potentate. Moreover the ship carried a cargo of other expensive peace offerings, among which were twenty-six barrels of perfectly good dollars.”

“Twenty-six barrels of dollars?” Joe repeated in amazement.

“Oh, yes. Congress was doing the thing handsomely. This was back in 1798, while the *Constitution* was lying in the river waiting for the money necessary to equip her after she was launched.”

“My word!” exclaimed Joe. “Why couldn’t they have used those barrels of dollars and fitted out the *Constitution* to blow up the pirates?”

“Because as a nation we don’t like fighting,” replied Mr. Shepard. “Our country has always tried to keep the peace, even at the expense of our national honor and our national pocketbook. We haven’t even believed in being prepared; so that we always go into a war handicapped. In the case

of the Dey down in Algiers, he accepted the *Crescent*, returning, I suppose, a perfunctory thanks.

“What is important about this episode is not so much what we did as the effect our supine policy had upon the Moslems with whom we were dealing. They knew little or nothing about what sort of people we were. The only way they could judge us was by our actions, as interpreted in the light of what they themselves would do in like circumstances. If any nation wanted to collect tribute from *them*, it would have to show a willingness to fight and sufficient force to make the outcome a foregone conclusion. There were no pacifists on the Barbary Coast. The corsairs of North Africa could not conceive of such an attitude of mind. If they wanted something they took it, provided they had the power; and long experience with European countries had convinced them that Christians were timid, weak-kneed creatures who would rather be robbed than resist.

“Having humbled ourselves in various ways to keep the Dey in a good humor, we can’t altogether blame him for acting toward us in the extremely high-handed way he did. He couldn’t be expected to realize that there was a limit to our patience. A people who haggled over the price of ransom while their fellow countrymen toiled in slavery would never develop pluck enough to defy him. Such were his not unnatural conclusions, and he treated our representatives accordingly.

“After the *Crescent* incident we paid promptly, and along in the spring of 1800 it was time to start another annual allowance on its way to Algiers. The *George Washington*, a converted merchantman rated as a 24-gun frigate, was

chosen to make the journey. She was commanded by Captain William Bainbridge, who, I am sure, disliked the duty exceedingly. To be the bearer of tribute must be most distasteful to a brave naval officer, and the captain's experiences on the expedition were peculiarly humiliating. He arrived at Algiers in September and anchored in the harbor. He put the money he was entrusted with into the hands of Mr. O'Brien, our Consul, and prepared to quit the place as promptly as might be. The Dey, however, had other plans for the *George Washington*. He had been having trouble with the Sultan and wished to send an Ambassador to Constantinople with presents to placate the supreme ruler of all the Moslems. Captain Bainbridge and his ship were admirably fitted for the mission, therefore he issued orders to that end.

“Captain Bainbridge obtained an audience with the Dey and explained, with as much patience as he could muster, that Constantinople was not on the way back to America from Algiers and that he was going home at once.

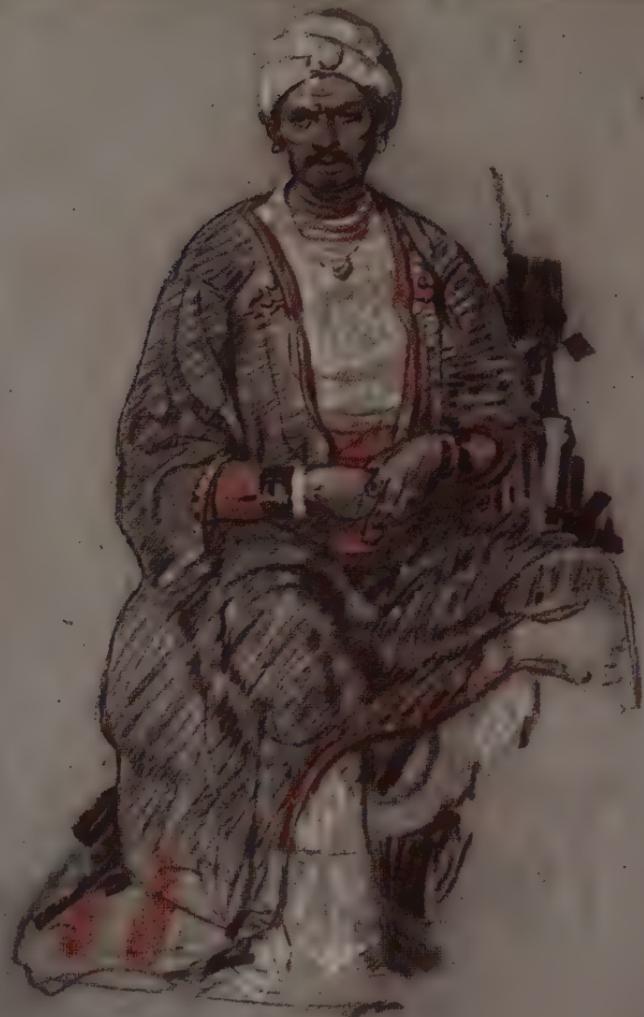
“‘Don’t argue with me,’ replied the Dey peremptorily. ‘I command you to go to Constantinople. You bring me tribute, don’t you?’

“‘Yes,’ replied Captain Bainbridge; because, of course, he had just done that very thing.

“‘Very well then,’ continued the Dey, ‘as only slaves pay tribute, suppose you do as you’re told and cease answering back.’

“Of course these are not the precise words exchanged by the Dey and Captain Bainbridge; but it is the sense of them.”

“Don’t tell me that he did it,” Joe burst out.



CAPTAIN BAINBRIDGE OBTAINED AN AUDIENCE WITH THE DEY



“Yes, he did,” replied Mr. Shepard, “and don’t be in too much of a hurry to criticize the Captain. From here, you think it looks as if he could have refused. Well, suppose he had? The Algerians would have taken the *George Washington*, or blown her to bits; for she was anchored under the guns of the fortress. That was a consideration, but not the most important one. There were some two hundred merchant vessels in the vicinity, and the Dey, as he threatened if he wasn’t obeyed, would have declared war on us and sent his corsairs out to seize them.”

“All the same,” Joe insisted, “the Captain should have told the Dey he wouldn’t do it. That’s what an officer of these days would have done.”

“Ho, ho!” laughed Mr. Shepard. “We aren’t paying tribute these days. Captain Bainbridge had just handed over a number of thousand dollars to keep us from having a war with Algiers. Do you think the Congress which voted that money would have been pleased to see it thrown away by a captain who didn’t want to go to Constantinople?”

“No, I suppose not,” agreed Joe. “On the other hand I should think he would have refused any way. He couldn’t have liked being ordered ’round like that.”

“Of course he didn’t like it. Naval officers have to do a lot of things they don’t like even today. They must act in accordance with the policy of the government they represent. Their own wishes in the matter have nothing to do with the decisions they arrive at. If Captain Bainbridge had done as he wished, he never would have taken that tribute to Algiers.”

“Well,” Joe admitted, “he was in a beastly situation, I must admit.”

"There's no argument about that," Mr. Shepard said, "moreover this was not the first time the Dey had made such demands. Ships of England, France and Spain had performed similar services, which fact Captain Bainbridge knew very well. Also he was quite sure that there were a great many people in America who would have thought him extremely haughty to bring about a war by refusing a 'request,' as they would have put it, which captains of other nations had not been too proud to grant.

"I don't think it is fair to blame Captain Bainbridge for his compliance with the Dey's demands. He did it most reluctantly and only after the earnest pleadings of Mr. O'Brien, who thought most of the two hundred ships which were liable to seizure. So the Captain took the Dey's Ambassador to Constantinople where a curious thing happened. The Sultan was, you know, the supreme ruler of the Moslem Empire. I fancy he may have been a nice old chap with a fine sense of humor. The arrival of the *George Washington* was called to his attention and he noticed her flag with no little interest. He had probably never heard of the United States and certainly cared nothing about our country. The stars on the pennant were the things that attracted him. He liked the look of them waving in the breeze over the Sea of Marmora. His own flag bore a crescent and he considered it a good omen, or something of the sort, that this constellation of ours should have come sailing into his sacred waters. We don't know exactly what he had in mind nor does it make any difference what influenced him. Possibly Captain Bainbridge, smarting under his treatment by the Dey, went to some trouble to be particularly nice to the Sultan and his court. The upshot of this visit proved very

satisfactory. In one way or other Captain Bainbridge pleased the Sultan, who presented him with a document which they called a 'firman'; a sort of special passport which gave the holder complete protection from any interference by the lesser Moslem rulers. The Captain accepted it with thanks; patted the Sultan on the back, metaphorically, of course; told him what a good fellow he was; and, without loss of time, sailed straight back to Algiers.

"I am inclined to doubt that the Captain would have been in such a hurry to see the Dey if he hadn't had that firman. As it was he took the precaution, on this visit, of anchoring his ship beyond the range of the guns of the fortress. Then he went ashore and Mr. O'Brien told him that the Dey had another agent he wanted sent to Constantinople.

"'Is that so?' said Captain Bainbridge. 'Get me an interview with the royal robber.'

"This was arranged and our Captain listened while the Dey told him what was on his mind.

"'Nothing doing,' said Captain Bainbridge, or words to that effect; and he meant it this time.

"The Dey having grown used to Americans obeying his commands, was very angry indeed. It is reported that he leaped to his feet and drew his scimitar, moved with the intention of slaying then and there this insolent officer of a country which paid him tribute with more or less regularity. It was at this moment that Captain Bainbridge produced his firman and the Dey salaamed.

"The Sultan, you see, was a very superior person who expected to have his passports honored and who was most unsympathetic to those who ignored them. He had been known to cut off the head of an offender for much less

than that, as the Dey was perfectly aware. Firmans were not handed out to everybody, so it was evident that this American naval officer was a person of much greater importance upon his return from Constantinople than he had been on his previous visit. The Dey's anger disappeared. He sheathed his scimitar, his voice grew soft and gentle:

“‘What can I do for you, Captain?’ he asked, with an ingratiating smile.

“It happened that the Captain knew exactly what he wanted, and I am inclined to believe that he bullied the Dey unmercifully. Such an opportunity might not occur again. The French consul and fifty or more of his countrymen had been made prisoners by the Algerians and, although we were still at war with France, the Captain could not stand by and see Christians slaving in that Moslem town. And he said so.

“‘Give them up!’ he demanded.

“‘With pleasure,’ replied the Dey, and it was done.

“The *George Washington* sailed away with a large party of grateful Frenchmen. Captain Bainbridge landed his passengers at Alicant and ordered his vessel headed for America. Then he sat down in his cabin and wrote out a report of what had happened to him.

“He ended by saying that he hoped never again to be sent upon such an errand unless he were authorized to deliver the tribute from the mouths of cannon. When he arrived home the Secretary of the Navy complimented him upon his management of a difficult situation and promoted him to the command of the frigate *Essex*. The next time he went into the Mediterranean the tribute was in the form he had expressed himself as eager to carry.”

## CHAPTER VII

“I suppose you’ve been wondering what the *Constitution* was doing while Captain Bainbridge was having his affair with the Dey of Algiers?” remarked Mr. Shepard, one bright morning.

Joe caught his grandfather’s eye and smiled. He was aware that his reply to this question was likely to cause comment.

“She was laid up in New York, dismantled and out of commission, from 1801 until 1803;” he said somewhat consciously.

“How did you know that?” asked Mr. Shepard, his white eyebrows lifted in mild surprise.

“I read it last night while you and Grandmother were out.”

“Ho, ho!” laughed Mr. Shepard, “I thought you didn’t like history.”

Joe sat silent for a moment. He found it difficult to explain how he had come to glance through two or three of the many volumes relating to the old ship which he found on the bookshelves.

“I don’t think I like history any better than I did before,” he confessed frankly. “All the same I’m interested in what happened to the *Constitution* because, somehow, I feel as if I’d made friends with her; which sounds like nonsense when you say it out loud.”

“Not at all,” Mr. Shepard declared. “A thing does not have to be alive for a person to be fond of it. And this is

particularly true of sailing ships. They seem to be animated, not only because they move, but because each has its own characteristics. One may steer badly to port and perfectly to starboard. Another may be extremely awkward in coming about, apparently reluctant to change her course. Some have wet decks in all weathers, while others are dry in the roughest seas. The *Constitution* had a great tendency to drag her anchors, as if she wanted to keep going. No two ships are exactly alike although they may have been constructed from the same plans; and it is these differences which give to each an appearance of individuality. Except in rare instances, the crew grow to have an affection for their vessel, very often because of her faults. The skipper talks of her and to her as if she were a real person of whom he was especially fond. No, I shouldn't say it was nonsense for you to feel that you've made friends with 'Old Ironsides.' "

"Well," Joe commented thoughtfully, "it seems that the more you know about a thing the more you want to know, and it keeps you thinking. When you spoke of Lindbergh the other day it started me wondering if his plane isn't going to be remembered in much the same way in connection with flying, as the *Constitution* is in its relation to the navy. The 'Spirit of St. Louis' isn't the first airship, any more than 'Old Ironsides' was the first frigate; nevertheless each of them had a lot to do with starting something important."

"That idea hadn't occurred to me," rejoined Mr. Shepard, "and there's a good deal in it, too. In any such development there is usually an individual who shows the way. He always takes risks of one sort or another; often with his life,

which he doesn't count as the most important consideration. He is much more concerned with the demonstration of certain theories he holds about the best way to expand a particular field in which he is interested. He risks his reputation to prove that he is right. That is what Colonel Lindbergh is doing for aviation. We had a man who did a similar work for the Navy."

"Who was he?" asked Joe.

"Edward Preble," replied Mr. Shepard. "I spoke of him, you remember, as captain of the brig *Pickering*, one of the four revenue vessels which accompanied the *Constitution* on her first service under Captain Nicholson."

"I do remember. You mentioned him especially."

"He's a very special person to keep in mind when we talk about the beginnings of our Navy. It may be that we are straining a point in making a comparison between him and Colonel Lindbergh. Still there is a likeness through the fact that each was, in a way, a pioneer. Perhaps you'll see what I'm driving at when we come to talk more of Commodore Preble. How far did you get in your reading?"

"Not much beyond where you left off. I looked back to make sure I had one or two facts straight in my head. I did discover, however, that when Captain Bainbridge came home and reported his experiences, the nation got all stirred up over the way the Dey had treated him. I think Congress was getting ready to do something."

"It wasn't only that particular Dey who was making trouble," Mr. Shepard took up the tale. "There were other sensitive gentlemen on the Barbary Coast who considered themselves quite as important and as worthy of tribute as the royal pirate of Algiers. One of these was Jussuf Cara-

malli, who called himself the Dey of Tripoli after he had pushed his brother Hamet off the throne. He complained bitterly to our Consul that we were bribing the rulers of Tunis and Algiers at a much higher figure than we were paying him. He felt that there was discrimination which reflected upon his importance. He couldn't understand why he shouldn't have a frigate loaded with presents and *thirty* barrels of dollars. He considered that he had not been treated fairly and wrote a letter to the President expressing exactly what he thought. That letter is still on file, and it is both amusing and instructive. He begins by pointing out that we have been at considerable pains to win his good will. Our Consul at Tripoli was constantly reiterating, in a flood of words, our desire to continue the amicable relations that had existed for several years. Which was all very well, so far as it went. He, Jussuf Caramalli, however, had grown weary of vain talk. He insisted upon tangible evidences of our wish to hold his friendship. A lack of deeds on our part was the burden of his complaint. Why were his brothers of Algiers and Tunis so highly favored? He does not specify precisely what additional tribute he desires. He is willing to leave that to our government, counting upon our good sense to make us realize what is best for us. He insists only upon an answer by the return post to Tripoli and ends with the threat that failing to remedy this obvious favoritism shown to other pirates, he feels himself perfectly justified in making war upon us.

“This communication might give the impression that the other Moslem gentlemen in North Africa were entirely satisfied. Far from it. The Dey of Tunis was as much annoyed as the ruler of Tripoli over our seeming fondness for

the Algerians. Moreover he had much fault to find with what we had been sending him. We had ignored his specifications in the size of lumber we had shipped to him and many other matters were not satisfactory. He did not write to the President. He let our Consul do that, after he had made his wishes known. There was no ambiguity about his demands nor did he leave the choice of presents to our judgment. He wanted among other things, forty cannon, all to be 24-pounders, and ten thousand stand of small arms. And he wanted them right away. There must be no nonsense or shilly-shallying, for he was an impatient sort of person who liked his orders carried out promptly.

“Time had been running on while these complaints had drifted up from North Africa, and by 1801, Algiers was due for another annual payment of tribute. Again the Dey began to look for the return of the *George Washington*, and growled ominously at her non-arrival. Our Consul transmitted these growls to Washington.

“It cannot be denied that the rulers of the Barbary Coast were perfectly logical in their attitude toward us. Our timid policy of paying to induce the corsairs to let us alone, gave the natural impression that we were afraid of them. What other impression could they have? And of course, they all tried to bully us into giving them more and more as the years went by.

“A change, however, had come over the feelings of the American people. They were, as you might say, getting fed up with insolent potentates in flowing robes and gaudy turbans. They began to resent being treated like dirt under the yellow slippers of Turkish Governors. They objected to being called slaves, and having their ships sent hither

and yon upon the errands of a quick tempered gentleman who was prone to draw his sharp scimitar when anything displeased him. Moreover we had done extremely well in our recent clash with France and were proud of our navy. To be sure we had since reduced it until we possessed only thirteen frigates; still, we believed that we had more than a sufficient force to deal with this situation; so we came to the conclusion that the one-sided game with the Barbary pirates had gone far enough. We didn't want to fight if we could help it. We have always disliked war. We hoped the corsairs would change their point of view toward us and be good little corsairs according to our ideas. Unfortunately we had convinced these pirates that we were a cowardly race and, as often happens, these two points of view could not be reconciled without a conflict.

“However we began quite gently. Commodore Dale was given command of a small squadron consisting of three frigates and a 12-gun schooner. He was sent down to the Mediterranean to look over the situation and see what was going on. He had presents aboard for the good little corsairs, but there was a suspicion that one or two of them might already have declared war. The Commodore was instructed to act circumspectly and not make trouble. His mission was to look after any merchantmen that might be in the neighborhood and to cruise off the ports of Tripoli, Tunis and Algiers to let them know at least that we had some fighting ships. He was not to stay later than the first of December and was then to return home to report. Not a warlike proceeding, you will observe.

“Captain Bainbridge went on this expedition in command of the *Essex*, with thirty-two guns loaded with round shot

pointing through her ports. He must have chuckled a bit, remembering his last voyage, and I have no doubt was hoping for a chance to see his old friend the Dey. He, with the rest of the squadron, arrived off Gibraltar on the first of July and was sent in the *Essex* to gather together any American merchantmen he could find and convoy them to their destinations. The rest of the squadron went to various duties and the *President*, Commodore Dale's flag-ship, sailed into the Mediterranean to have a look at Algiers. When he arrived in his 44-gun frigate, Mr. O'Brien, our Consul, assured him that the sight of this American man-of-war had a very quieting effect upon this impatient Dey. So far so good. The Commodore moved on to his next port of call. Here he knew he should find a different situation, for the impatient ruler of Tripoli had cut down the American flag, which was his picturesque way of declaring war upon us. Commodore Dale tried to open negotiations in the hope of making a peace, but nothing came of it. The *President* went back to Gibraltar and from there sailed to America. The Commodore left the *Philadelphia* with the *Essex* to look after the shipping, and prepared a report of what the conditions were in the Mediterranean. This, really, is what he had gone to find out and, although the *Enterprise* had captured one Tripolitan cruiser, neither the equipment nor the instructions he had received warranted him in taking aggressive measures against our declared enemy.

“We were, you see, at war with Tripoli whether we liked it or not; but we set to work to win. Congress, reflecting the opinion of the country, determined to put an end to paying tribute to anybody. The President was given power to do anything he thought necessary and, with his Secretary

of the Navy, prepared to make Jussuf Caramalli as uncomfortable as possible.

“To that end a squadron of light cruisers was ordered to the Mediterranean under command of Commodore Richard D. Morris. By the summer of 1803 these vessels were all on their stations and everyone expected that they would accomplish their mission without delay. Unfortunately this expedition accomplished very little and the high hopes entertained for its success were never realized. And of course, someone had to bear the blame. The most responsible officer was naturally the target for criticism, and Commodore Morris was ordered to give up his command. When he came home a court of three naval officers and one civilian decided that he had not used due diligence in prosecuting the war, and President Jefferson dismissed him from the service. Those who know best about these things have concluded that so severe a punishment was not justified. It isn’t a matter for us to discuss; but so long as the incident had to be mentioned it is only fair to the memory of that officer to call attention to the fact that his case was reviewed in a somewhat perfunctory way, and certainly the findings of an informal court did not warrant Mr. Jefferson in depriving Captain Morris of his commission.

“Even though the blame for the inactivity of the squadron may have been placed upon the shoulders of its commanding officer, the men at the head of our Navy had learned that the fault did not lie wholly with the personnel. The ships sent were entirely unfitted for the service. Except for the *Enterprise*, the vessels were all frigates of too deep draft to blockade the port of Tripoli successfully, and their armament was too light for bombardment of the shore de-

fenses. Boats of shallower draft were needed, and during the spring of 1803 we built four. Two brigs, the *Argus* and the *Siren*, each carrying sixteens guns; with the *Nautilus* and *Vixen*, 12-pounders, were added to our Navy. They were fine, beautifully designed craft and we shall hear a lot more about them. They, with the *Enterprise*, were to form the fast-sailing division of the squadron for blockade duty.

“Now for the purpose of attacking the enemy we should have had two or three ships-of-the-line to bombard the shore batteries; but being a peace-loving nation, we had decided, after the war with France, that there would never be any need of them and, although Congress provided for their construction, they had not been started yet. So we sent the *Philadelphia*, which by this time had come home for a new crew, and the *Constitution*, in commission again and designated to be the flag-ship. Captain Edward Preble was made Commodore of the force, and before we go on with the tale it might be a good idea to take a glance at what sort of a life he had led up to this time.

“He is one of the famous men in our Navy and if we can get to know him a bit we may have a better picture of him in our minds when we talk of the things he did while he stepped about the quarter-deck of ‘Old Ironsides.’ He was evidently a far-sighted and extremely capable officer, who had a great affection for his country and a fine regard for the Navy; both of which sentiments he took pains to establish in the hearts and minds of those he commanded.

“You can read all about him in any general biography, so I needn’t say much about his early life. Apparently he was born with a love for the sea, although he was brought

up on a farm near Portland, Maine. His education was well started, because his father had planned a professional career for him, when our Revolution came along and stopped all that. The Prebles were American patriots, and the Commodore's father was a brigadier general of militia; so there was a deal of rebel talk in that house, you may be sure.

"In 1777, when young Preble was sixteen years old, he enlisted on a privateer and went off to fight the British at sea. A year or two later he was a midshipman in the marine service of the state of Massachusetts, on board a 26-gun ship called the *Protector*. After various experiences he was taken prisoner and sent to New York, where a friend of the family's secured his release. Off he went again, a lieutenant now, and had a fine time until the end of the war. He made a notable record for bravery and skill and no doubt would have continued in the Navy if that service had been nationalized.

"As you know, it wasn't; and Lieutenant Preble, loving the sea as he must have, was forced to be content with the merchant marine. For fifteen years after this he sailed in various craft, seeing the world and forming his character, as well as mastering the art of handling ships. He may have done a bit of fighting also, for merchantmen of those days were usually armed to repel hostile natives, carrying a gun or two besides muskets.

"When we began our contest with France, Edward Preble was commissioned a lieutenant and assigned to the *Constitution*. However, probably because he wanted a command of his own, he was given the *Pickering*, where we first met him. In June, 1779, he was made a captain, and on the *Essex*, convoyed a fleet of merchantmen back from the East

Indies. Due to illness he was not again in active service until he was ordered to fly a broad pennant aboard the *Constitution* and sail his flag-ship to the Mediterranean. Now you have a bit of the Commodore's background. The next time we have a chance to talk we'll see what he did."

## CHAPTER VIII

MR. SHEPARD and Joe had been working rather silently at the model. The topmasts had been set and the standing gear rigged. The younger man, through much practice, had learned to tie the proper knots with increasing speed, and he looked at the tiny rope-ladders, running up to the tops with considerable pride.

“What sort of a fellow is your football coach?” his grandfather asked abruptly.

“A peach!” replied Joe, with marked enthusiasm. “And, gee, how he makes us work.”

Mr. Shepard nodded understandingly.

“Is that the reason you like him?”

“I don’t believe it’s that,” Joe returned slowly. “I never thought about it before and it isn’t so easy to tell you why. He’s a terrible grouch, mostly, and yet the men would go through fire and water for him. Sometimes he gets your goat so badly that you want to turn in your uniform and quit right there.”

“You don’t, though, do you?” Mr. Shepard put in.

“Of course not. You forget it in a little while, and when practice is over and you’re rested up so that you can think straight, you discover that he was perfectly right to call you down. I think the reason we’re keen for him is because he’s square. Doesn’t pal around with any of us, yet, somehow, if I were in any kind of trouble, I’d get it off my chest quicker to him than to anyone else I know,—outside the family, of course,” Joe added with an apologetic grin.

“Does he work pretty hard himself?”

“Like a dog, during the season. He eats and sleeps football. Always busy figuring out a new play or something; and believe me, you don’t want to butt in when he’s thinking.”

“Did it ever occur to you to wonder why he works so hard?”

“Sure! He’s a graduate. He does it for the University. It isn’t personal glory. That’s what he keeps hammering into us all the time. He hasn’t any use for a swelled head, no matter how good the man is.”

“And he’s been successful, too, hasn’t he?”

“The older men say he’s the best we ever had.”

“Perhaps you’ll be surprised if I tell you that Commodore Preble had very much the same sort of task as a football coach; though, of course, it was enormously more complicated. He wasn’t unlike the man you’ve been speaking of. It would be a good idea if you kept that in mind while we talk. Your coach is working for the University. Commodore Preble had his heart and soul wrapped up in the United States Navy. Essentially the two institutions are not so very different. Nor were the young officers in any marked way different from your football squad. To be sure they staked their lives on their skill and courage. Still, I don’t believe they thought any more of that than you chaps do of bruises or an occasional broken bone.

“By and large the parallel isn’t so bad, particularly in the early days of our Navy when Commodore Preble was its first regular coach.

“Looking at the matter in that light we should try to gain an idea of the conditions under which the Commodore

had to work. His task was to beat the Dey of Tripoli and the game was to be played four thousand miles from home. You don't want to forget that. The next consideration would be the equipment; that is, the ships at his disposal and their fitness for the undertaking; which in football would correspond to uniforms, head-gears and what not that are needed. Then there is the kind of material to be shaped into a team. In other words the men on the squad. Most important of all was the banding together of these elements through a vital, though somewhat elusive factor, which grows with experience throughout the years—morale, *esprit de corps*, as the French call it, the University spirit upon which your coach insists.

“In some ways at least the comparison is a good one. There's no need to continue to point it out as we go along. You can follow it easily enough, only remembering that Commodore Preble was a player as well as a coach and that he was starting it all. Heretofore our Navy had been playing scrub games, more or less with picked-up teams which had never practised together and which were disbanded as soon as the contests were over. Now we had a regular organization and it was extremely important that the fundamental traditions, which would guide its development, should be well and truly laid. They were, and, for that great service, Commodore Preble is remembered and highly honored.

“As I told you, the task was to bring Jussuf Caramalli to terms, and we had two ways of proceeding to that end. The first was by a blockade of the port of Tripoli so effective that the people could have no communication with the outside world by sea. That method found the squadron fairly well off, since we had five light-draft vessels, four of

which had been built for the purpose. It was a somewhat tedious undertaking, however, involving great hardship during the winter months; also somewhat dangerous by reason of the sudden, fierce winds that arise on the North African coast. Moreover, the shore line, particularly off the harbor of Tripoli, is very irregular, with an extremely treacherous outlying ledge of rocks to the north and east of the town.

“Relying only on a blockade to bring the Dey to terms meant possibly years of this service. It was necessary, then, that we should develop offensive operations. These consisted of actually attacking the town of Tripoli, which was walled with masonry and defended by numerous batteries. For this purpose we needed ships-of-the-line; vessels able to withstand a heavy fire and armed with guns capable of battering down the forts. Ships of this class, you remember, had only been talked about. Everybody hoped we would never have another war and tried to believe the pacifists, who insisted that it was a waste of money and a challenge to other countries to build them. However, we did have a few heavily armed frigates fit for aggressive tactics; so the *Constitution* and the *Philadelphia* were included in the force. There were also other vessels needed for offense, namely gunboats, which were small craft, each carrying a 24-pound gun in the bow; and bombers, similar boats with mortars designed to throw a shell over the fortifications. We had none of these, although the Commodore borrowed a few old ones in the Mediterranean. So much for the equipment, which in spite of the experiences of Commodores Dale and Morris, was still woefully deficient in several important items.

“The field of operations was, as I said, four thousand

miles from home. This might not have been so great a handicap had not the war between France and England created a scarcity of all supplies needed to sustain the squadron. To add to the difficulties, we had, as yet, no standing with the European nations. They hardly knew anything about us along the Mediterranean. Republics were unknown quantities, and no foreign ruler of a small state wished to incur the enmity of his neighbor by being too friendly to the people who were experimenting with an uncertain form of government. No one wanted to cash drafts on the United States Treasury in those days. They were by no means sure they would ever be paid.

“We seem to be piling up the difficulties which confronted Commodore Preble. We cannot possibly exaggerate them; nor, at this date, can we quite comprehend them. You may be sure, however, that the Commodore was fully aware of the thorns in his path. The Secretary of the Navy confessed that the expedition was greatly handicapped by the inadequacy of its equipment, and to this gentleman’s credit it must be said that, so far as he was able, he gave Commodore Preble a free hand. There was to be no interference from the civilian head of the service, which is more than can be said of other Secretaries who came after him!

“Being the commander of such a squadron is a great deal more than presenting a picturesque figure on the quarter-deck directing the gunners to blow the enemy out of the water. That is a small part of it. The commodore has the responsibility of the entire affair. He must see to it that his men have food, clothing and water; that there is plenty of powder and ball; that the crews do not get sick and that they are properly cared for when they do. He is greatly

concerned with the spirit of the men under him. Jealousies among the officers could not be tolerated and a rigid discipline must be maintained upon all the ships, not only upon the one upon which his pennant flies. He must secure money to pay for necessities that can be bought, and must have sufficient tact to deal with various sorts of natives wholly alien to his own civilization. He must have the ability to discharge the duties of a hotel manager, the responsibilities of a bank president, the obligations of a diplomat, added to the difficult functions of his profession. It is a sufficiently trying position in these days when there are wireless means of communication with the various units of the force and fast steamships at hand by which a commander may keep in touch with his base. When you reflect that this squadron was four thousand miles from home and that it took from six weeks to three months to bring out supplies, the difficulties of the task are greatly magnified. Remember, too, that our ships were in unfriendly waters frequented by corsairs and that only a few neutral ports were open to them. Truly it was not an undertaking calculated to ease a commander's slumbers.

"In reflecting over the situation which confronted Commodore Preble, I've often thought that merely in accepting this assignment he showed himself an exceedingly brave and patriotic gentleman. He might readily have avoided it. Physically he was far from strong and suffered constantly from ill health. That fact alone would have supplied an excellent excuse for him to have escaped the responsibility none realized more fully than he. Luckily for us, he was not that sort of a man. A great love for his country and a strong desire to uphold the honor and prestige of our Navy, left

scant room in his thoughts for personal considerations. He undertook, knowingly, a most arduous task. A few years after its accomplishment, at the age of forty-six, he died.

“We shall wait until we get the ships and men to the scene of operations before we take a look at the squad; by which I mean the officers of our forces.

“Lieutenant Isaac Hull was already on the spot commanding the schooner *Enterprise*. The first to leave home was the *Nautilus* with Lieutenant Somers in charge. She arrived off Gibraltar at the end of July, the year being 1803, you recollect. About a month later the frigate *Philadelphia* touched at the rendezvous and went off immediately into the Mediterranean upon important business.

“The *Constitution* followed with Commodore Preble, and it would be interesting to note what had occurred on this trip and so to discover what sort of a commander she had on her quarter-deck. There was a midshipman aboard named Charles Morris who wrote his memoirs and had a bit to say of this voyage and something of the relation of the commander to the men under him. At the beginning, it is plain enough that his officers did not like Preble. For one thing they knew scarcely anything about him. They were too young to have had any experience in our Revolution; and, in the affair with France, Captain Preble had been sent out to the East Indies to convoy a merchant fleet home. After that he fell ill and had little chance for personal contacts until the moment when he walked aboard his flag-ship.

“Without doubt the Commodore was quick-tempered and irritable. His wretched health would explain that, although his officers would hardly realize the fact during the first

weeks of association. It wouldn't have been like him to complain of the way he was feeling. Then, too, he had very definite notions of how matters should be conducted in our Navy and was not slow to put them into effect. Heretofore the relation between senior and junior officers, for instance, was at the discretion of the commander with no precedent to guide him. On one ship the captain might be a hale-fellow-well-met sort of person, very chummy with all those under him. On another ship opposite conditions were as likely to prevail. In other words there was no settled policy on this question of etiquette, which is not so trivial a consideration as the unthinking may suppose. This, of course, was only one of many traditions which were in the process of being formed, and Commodore Preble, realizing that the young men with whom he was dealing would one day be at the head of the service, wished most sincerely to start them right. It was not, you must remember, a personal matter with him. He was not at all concerned as to whether his officers liked him or not. All he wanted was to show them how a ship should be commanded to make it most efficient. And, as I said, he had most definite ideas.

"He was a stern disciplinarian. Everything aboard the *Constitution* had to be exactly right. He would not even listen to excuses. Each of his officers had certain duties which he was expected to perform perfectly. Nothing short of that would satisfy the Commodore. I haven't a doubt he stormed and raved about the quarter-deck of the *Constitution* when anything was not to his liking; much as your football coach does when one of his players is stupid or indifferent.

"And, as you would say, before they understood what

he was driving at or what sort of a chap he was, he got their goats. For a time there was considerable resentment against him and it was not until the *Constitution* neared the end of her voyage that an incident occurred which gave these young fellows an opportunity to observe another side of their commander's character.

“According to Midshipman Morris's account, the *Constitution* was off the Straits of Gibraltar one very dark night. Suddenly the watch reported a ship near them, sailing upon a parallel course. They could not make out how sizable a vessel she was, although they were fairly certain that she was a man-of-war. Now in those days a wise commander took no chances with a strange ship. This vaguely outlined craft might be a corsair trying to board them before they suspected it. Possibly it was an English frigate under a captain who, if he were so minded and needed a few sailors to fill up his crew, would not hesitate to stop an American and take as many men as he wanted. The English had done that very thing more than once. Commodore Preble quietly called his crew to quarters and prepared for any contingency. Then he hailed the stranger through a speaking trumpet.

“‘What ship is that?’ he called, and no one on the quarter-deck so much as whispered while they awaited an answer.

“‘What ship is that?’ came back presently, a somewhat impertinent challenge.

“Commodore Preble gave the name of his vessel and once more asked for information.

“‘What ship is that?’ The repeated question floated across the quiet waters carrying a suggestion that the stranger was reluctant to tell anything about himself.

“There was a highly interested group of young men on our frigate. Here was a chance to find out what there was in Commodore Preble beside a person who snapped out his orders and was satisfied with nothing short of perfection. Here was a situation in which only their commanding officer was concerned, and they waited to see how he would handle it. One thing they discovered. He grew just as impatient with strangers as he did with his own men.

“‘I am now hailing you for the last time,’ he shouted. ‘If a proper answer is not returned I shall fire a shot into you.’ The lads on deck nudged each other.

“‘If you fire a shot,’ came the prompt reply out of the darkness, ‘I shall return a broadside.’

“Now, what would their commander do? the young men asked each other. Here was a most interesting crisis. It began to look as if some mysterious unknown was about to get the ‘old man’s goat.’ Once more his question was repeated, and at last they heard a definite reply.

“‘This is His Britannic Majesty’s Ship *Donegal*, eighty-four guns, Sir Richard Strahan, an English Commodore. Send your boat on board.’

“Here was news indeed. The *Constitution* was rated a forty-four and in a contest with such a ship as the stranger proclaimed would have little chance once the cannon were set going. Compliance with the demand that a boat be sent to the English vessel would be a tacit apology to a superior, a somewhat humiliating procedure. Yet what to do? The young officers wondered how their Commodore would act in this contingency. They were not kept waiting.

“Excited and angry he leaped into the hammock netting along the bulwarks and answered:

“‘This is the United States Ship *Constitution*, forty-four guns, Edward Preble, American Commodore, who will be damned before he sends his boat aboard any vessel!’ Then he leaped back on deck and shouted an order to his crew: ‘Blow your matches, boys!’

“The entire ship’s company ran to their stations, prepared for action. Everyone aboard the *Constitution* had learned a lesson that night which has never been forgotten. You cannot bluff an officer of the United States Navy.

“And in reality, although no one on board the *Constitution* had a suspicion of it, the Englishmen were bluffing. Instead of insisting that we send a boat they sent one, and a very much embarrassed lieutenant of His Britannic Majesty’s Navy came aboard the *Constitution* with an apologetic explanation. It was not the *Donegal*, as had been so defiantly proclaimed, but the English frigate, *Maidstone*. The deception was excused on the ground that our ship had not been discovered until they heard our first hail. Being wholly unprepared, and thinking the *Constitution* might be an enemy, they had returned their evasive answers in order to gain sufficient time to call their crew to quarters. In the circumstances the excuses were accepted and the two ships parted company. The incident, however, was long remembered. To those young fellows who had been put through their paces with a heavy hand, Commodore Preble had proved himself no laggard when it came to upholding the dignity of the Navy in which they all served. They began to learn that he was something more than a cranky commander on the look-out to find fault.

“‘The old man,’ they said to each other, ‘may be pepper, all right, but his heart is in the right place.’ From then

on their admiration for him grew. They began to catch a glimpse of the fact that, no matter what the odds, a high standard of dignity must be maintained aboard a ship flying the flag of the United States Navy. The Stars and Stripes were to be treated with respect by all nations, even the most powerful upon the Seven Seas. Commodore Preble had shown his youthful officers that only by courage in the face of any danger was respect to be won."

## CHAPTER IX

“*THE Constitution* arrived off Gibraltar on September 12 and was followed quickly by the smaller craft. On the first of October, the entire squadron had assembled; and now is as good a time as any to see what sort of men Commodore Preble had to train in order that they might measure up to the standards he conceived to be essential for officers in the United States Navy. It is highly improbable that he was conscious of the far-reaching effect his guidance was to have on the future of the service. His thoughts were upon the immediate task before him, and he wanted to form a team upon which he could rely to carry out his orders with courage, promptness and efficiency. When he gave a signal for a play he wanted to be certain that each individual could be depended upon to do his part without thought of self and for the credit of the institution which he had the honor to represent. I am sure he insisted that an honor was conferred upon the officer to whom was entrusted the duty of guarding the good name of his country and that no sacrifice was too great to maintain it. After all, to die for one’s country is a privilege. Can one conceive a more estimable end to life? I am sure Commodore Preble could not, and he had to make many decisions in which he was forced to weigh the lives of men against the needs of the nation he served. He never hesitated, nor did those who carried out his orders. It was a part of the job to risk

death, and they did it gallantly with a right good will.

"At first the Commodore was no more satisfied with his officers than they were with him. He complained to Colonel Lear, the Algerian Consul, who was aboard, that the Government had given him nothing but boys to deal with, which was perfectly true. Captain Bainbridge, the oldest of them, was twenty-nine, no very ancient person to be in command of one of our biggest ships with a complement of something over four hundred men. Quite young, as a matter of fact; but then, the Commodore himself was only forty-two; which is not a decrepit age for an officer who would rank as rear admiral in these days. Isaac Hull was twenty-seven. Lieutenant Charles Stewart was twenty-five. Richard Somers was about the same age as his bosom friend, Stephen Decatur, who was twenty-four. Someone has called Commodore Preble's squadron 'the nursery of the American Navy.' A very good name for it when you consider the youth of those who had burdens of command usually carried upon much more mature shoulders.

"It is true that young men of that generation were more used to accepting responsibilities at an early age than are young people now-a-days. Nevertheless Commodore Preble, facing a war, was justified in characterizing his officers as boys. At a later date, when during the stress of service they had learned each other's worth, Colonel Lear taxed the Commodore with his complaint. 'And so they are,' he replied; '*but they are good boys!*'

"They *were* good boys, and he moulded them into a team that could be depended upon in any emergency. Each of these officers carried from the flag-ship to his own vessel the desire for perfection which the commander insisted upon.

They learned to be as scrupulous as he to maintain all the niceties of etiquette and discipline aboard their own craft. And they developed an enormous respect for their coach. They were eager to follow his lead, to the end that the American people might be proud of the American Navy. We shall talk a great deal, at one time or another, about Commodore Preble's 'good boys.' What they learned in that nursery off the Barbary coast they never forgot, and when it came to be their turn to do the coaching they handed on to succeeding generations traditions which had been initiated during the trying months in which they fought the Tripolitan corsairs.

"Now then, let's see what was happening there when the *Constitution* was sailing for Gibraltar. Commodore Rogers had been in charge, pending the arrival of Commodore Preble. You remember that Captain Bainbridge in the *Philadelphia* had started out some three weeks before, and when he reported for duty, Commodore Rogers sent him off immediately to investigate a report that two Tripolitan corsairs were at large in the Mediterranean. He found them off the coast of Spain and, upon investigation, discovered that instead of being from Tripoli one of them was a cruiser belonging to the Emperor of Morocco, which had seized the American brig *Celica* of Boston nine days before. This was somewhat disconcerting, because our Government had negotiated a treaty of peace with the ruler of Morocco in which it had been stipulated that his pirates were not to bother our merchantmen, and this looked very much as if we had another enemy to combat. The settling of such questions was outside the province of a captain's duties, so he took the

Moorish cruiser and the *Celica* into Gibraltar and left the political difficulties to be solved by the Commodore.

“Some time later he went off to the task of blockading the port of Tripoli, in company with the schooner *Vixen* which had recently reached these waters. Hearing another report that one of Caramalli’s cruisers was out, Bainbridge, being the senior officer there, sent off the *Vixen* to pick up the corsair without delay. This left him alone on the station in a vessel not any too well suited for the duty. A deep draft frigate could not easily intercept a light craft able to run in close to the rocky shore. And, as luck would have it, a xebec was sighted early one Monday morning at the end of October, obviously trying to run the blockade. This was a queer looking, sharp-ended boat, rigged with both square and lateen sails on three masts. She was fast, and Captain Bainbridge knew that he was likely to have trouble in stopping her. His only chance was to steer a course which would converge upon that of the blockade runner as it made for the harbor. After an hour’s chase he opened fire on the xebec with one of his long guns in the hope of disabling her. Repeated attempts brought no results, and the *Philadelphia* was getting nearer and nearer to the shore, the lead showing rapidly shoaling water. Tripoli was now in plain sight and the people in the town watched with growing excitement the fortunes of the two vessels.

“There came a moment when Captain Bainbridge dared not approach the land any closer; so with great reluctance he gave the order to go about. The *Philadelphia* changed her course and sailed swiftly on a brisk beam wind for the open water. Suddenly, to the consternation of everyone on

board, the bow slid up on an uncharted ledge of rock and stopped abruptly."

"I remember that," Joe interrupted. "They couldn't get her off."

"No, and Captain Bainbridge did everything he could think of. First he sounded the water about the ship and found it plenty deep enough astern to float her; then the sails were braced a-back and all the guns run aft in the hope of lifting her bow. Failing to budge her, they threw overboard nearly all the guns, emptied the water casks and, as a last resort, cut down the foremast. Still she would not start.

"Meanwhile the xebec had run into Tripoli, made a report of what had happened, and in a short time a fleet of gunboats pushed off from the harbor with the intention of taking the American frigate. Very soon the *Philadelphia* was surrounded by a hostile enemy, who opened fire on the stranded ship; and, after a consultation with his officers, Captain Bainbridge ordered her scuttled and lowered his colors in surrender."

"Tough luck," murmured Joe, sympathetically.

"To be sure," agreed Mr. Shepard. "It was a great misfortune, for which no one could be fairly blamed. That, however, did not relieve Captain Bainbridge from his feeling of responsibility, and I am sure that only a realization of his entire helplessness brought him to the point of giving up his ship to the pirates. They were a barbarous lot and swarmed up the sides of the *Philadelphia* in great glee. They set to work at once to plunder, and even went so far as to half strip the officers of their uniforms. Then they hustled their prisoners ashore, where they suffered for



THEY HUSTLED THEIR PRISONERS ASHORE, WHERE THEY SUFFERED FOR  
EIGHTEEN MONTHS



eighteen months; a long time for Christians to be at the mercy of fanatical Moslems. That their privations were not worse was due to the kindness of the Danish Consul, a Mr. Nissen. He never ceased his efforts to ease the trials of our men, and his services should be remembered to his great honor whenever this disaster to the *Philadelphia* is talked about.

“Meanwhile what of the *Constitution*? She had arrived at Gibraltar about the middle of September and the first news Commodore Preble had of the situation was concerned with that Moorish cruiser that Captain Bainbridge had picked up with the American brig *Celica*. This fact hinted strongly at treachery on the part of the Emperor of Morocco, and the Commodore realized at once that he must settle with that gentleman before he went into the Mediterranean to deal with Jussuf Caramalli. He could not leave an enemy in his rear to prey upon his supply ships as they turned to enter the Straits of Gibraltar.

“Luckily Commodore Rogers, with the 36-gun frigate *New York* and the *John Adams*, a 28, was on hand, waiting to return to America as soon as Commodore Preble should take over command of the squadron. These vessels, with the *Constitution* and the *Nautilus*, made up a fairly formidable force, and it was decided that they should all go at once to pay a visit to the Emperor at Tangier. They resolved to act as if there was no hint of real trouble. All they wanted was an explanation. They would sit in the harbor with ports open so that his Royal Highness might look down from his castle and count the guns that could be used to blow up his town if he didn’t promise to be good.

“Unfortunately the Emperor wasn’t at home when they arrived and they had a considerable wait. He came at last, however, and I think he must have been somewhat disconcerted when he gazed down upon the blue waters of Tangier Bay and saw the American ships with the muzzles of their guns looking back at him. He was still more surprised when he met the cold and resolute gaze of Commodore Preble. That officer was entirely ready and willing to comply with all the formalities the Royal Moor desired. He simply wanted an assurance in black and white that no ships flying our flag would be molested. An interview was arranged and, despite any preconceived notion the Emperor may have had in regard to the timidity of Americans in general, Commodore Preble left him in no doubt at all of what sort of a man *he* was. With perfect courtesy, and in nicely phrased diplomatic speeches, he allowed the Emperor to infer that if he didn’t keep his pirates in hand his little town would be promptly blown to bits. An amicable and friendly meeting between a somewhat warlike Moor and a Yankee sailor. Just a man-to-man affair without much fuss and feathers. The Emperor had counted the guns on our ships in his harbor and had looked into the eyes of the American Commodore. A perfect understanding was quickly arrived at. The despotic ruler of Morocco repudiated the seizure of the *Celica*, vowing that he knew nothing about it and insisting that it was the independent act of the Governor of Tangier, to whom he would say a few harsh words for interfering with his dear friends, the Americans.

“Furthermore a new treaty of peace was drawn up with terms agreeable to both sides. This was promptly signed and the heretofore usual matter of tribute was not even men-

tioned in the pact. We stopped paying for protection, and we have had no further trouble with Morocco from that day to this. Commodore Preble fired off a lot of cannon in honor of the Emperor, said good-by with a smile and sailed back to Gibraltar, ready to take up the task of subduing Jussuf of Tripoli.

“So far so good; but all these negotiations had taken time. It was now the middle of October, with a lot yet to be done. The *New York* and the *John Adams* went off home, leaving the *Constitution* with the *Argus*, commanded by Stephen Decatur, who had arrived out of America a week or more before. The flag-ship, needing fresh water and other supplies, sailed to Cadiz and on her return dropped into the bay of Tangier just to let the Emperor know how confident the Commodore was that the treaty would be respected. Finally he once more returned to Gibraltar where, on the twelfth of November, he proclaimed, through our foreign ministers and consuls, that the blockade of Tripoli was in force and that he meant to see it respected. This done, he set sail for Syracuse; which he had chosen for his base of operations, counting upon the help of the Sicilians who also were at war with the belligerent Caramalli. In company with the *Argus* and *Nautilus*, the *Constitution* stopped to land Colonel Lear at his station in Algiers and, two days after leaving this port, they spoke a British ship and heard for the first time of the disaster which had befallen the *Philadelphia*. Calling at Malta, Commodore Preble found a letter from Captain Bainbridge confirming the bad news. He then went on to Syracuse where he anchored on the 28th of November.

“The loss of the *Philadelphia* was a severe blow at the

very outset of Commodore Preble's campaign against Tripoli. It reduced his fighting force almost a third. It was necessary, you see, to keep one of his small vessels on patrol duty along the Straits of Gibraltar, to guard against treachery or the possible escape of an enemy cruiser which would aim first at cutting off the squadron's supplies. Consequently the force which the Commodore could command for active operations consisted of the *Constitution*, two brigs and two schooners. Moreover the capture of the *Philadelphia* had give Jussuf much encouragement. It had not only reduced our forces, it had put in the hands of the Tripolitans several hundred prisoners who would be useful to them in future negotiations. In addition, it seemed to confirm their notion that the Americans were poor fighters. Hence the arrogant Dey became more haughty than ever and any hope of coming to a reasonable agreement with him was out of the question. There was now only one way to bring that gentleman to terms, and Commodore Preble set himself to the task with his usual courage and determination.

"The lateness of the season precluded any possibility of beginning operations against Tripoli before six or seven months had passed. The winter weather off the coast of Africa was too tempestuous and uncertain to hazard the bombardment of such a port; so the Commodore spent his time in busy preparation for the battle he was planning for the coming summer.

"Meanwhile, during the training season, he was becoming acquainted with his officers. Lieutenant Charles Stewart, who was now second in command of the squadron, was in charge of the *Siren*. Lieutenant Isaac Hull, senior to Stephen De-

catur, exchanged vessels with him, so that the former had the *Argus*, a 16-gun brig and the latter went on board the *Enterprise*, a 12-gun schooner, and served as aide to Commodore Preble on the *Constitution*. Lieutenant John Smith captained the *Vixen*, a 14-gun schooner, and Richard Somers sailed the *Nautilus*. It was in these trying days of preparation that the Commodore learned to know his men and continued the training which never ceased. Every one of these young officers vowed to himself that when the time came his vessel would be ready to do its share and more. On patrol duty during that winter they saw to it that their sailors and gunners were up to their work, and they drilled and experimented and kept eternally on the job of getting ready during those monotonous months in which they also blockaded the port of Tripoli.

“Early in December the Commodore received a letter from Captain Bainbridge, the secret part of which is said to have been written in sympathetic ink. The Captain was, of course, still a prisoner, and it was due to Mr. Nissen that communication was possible. The information contained in this message added another serious menace to the Americans’ plans. Captain Bainbridge reported that the *Philadelphia* had not been scuttled as he had ordered and that the Tripolitans had floated her off the rock, salvaged all her guns and were at that moment busily preparing her for active operations. This was bad news indeed. We had not only lost a frigate the size of the *Constitution* but had added to the enemy’s forces a 44-gun ship which could make no end of trouble for the small vessels on blockade duty.

“It happened that Lieutenant Decatur was with the Com-

modore when he read this letter. Naturally he spoke of the circumstances to his young aide and there was an immediate response.

“‘If you’ll let me, ‘sir,’ Decatur begged, ‘I’ll go and cut out the *Philadelphia*.’

“‘In the *Enterprise*?’ asked the Commodore.

“‘Aye, aye, sir,’ was the answer. ‘Every man aboard her will be glad to go.’

“The Commodore shook his head. ‘I’ll have to think about this,’ he replied; and indeed it was a situation calling for considerable study.

“Some days later Lieutenant Stewart arrived in the *Siren* and reported to the Commodore. He has told what had happened to the *Philadelphia* and was just as prompt as Decatur.

“‘If you’ll let me, sir,’ he pleaded, ‘I’ll go and cut out the *Philadelphia*.’

“‘In the *Siren*?’ asked the Commodore.

“‘Aye, aye, sir,’ answered Stewart. ‘There isn’t a man aboard her who won’t be glad of the chance.’

“Again the Commodore shook his head. He wanted more time to think.”

“All the same he must have been pleased to have those two officers so ready,” Joe remarked.

“Probably,” agreed Mr. Shepard. “It was a desperate undertaking to attempt to run into the harbor of Tripoli, where there were many galleys and gunboats, not to mention the cannon of the forts. To go in and bring out the *Philadelphia* seemed a hopeless task. The chances were highly in favor of those who undertook it losing their lives

without accomplishing anything. Still, as you suggested, the Commodore was probably pleased at the willingness of these young men to undertake so rash an adventure. On the other hand it was entirely what he expected from officers who served in the navy, and he didn't pat them on the back and tell them what brave fellows they were. He dismissed them, perhaps rather curtly, saying, no doubt, that when he decided what was to be done he would let them know.

"The Commodore did the planning. That was his job, and the problem in this instance was not easy to solve. He was quite aware that something must be done about the *Philadelphia*. She was too great a menace for him to ignore. Yet to send in one of his vessels might result in her loss, with all aboard her killed or taken prisoner.

"He had too few ships lightly to risk the capture of one of them. Nor were trained officers so plentiful that he could afford to throw any away. He wasn't sentimental about their risking their lives. That was all in the day's work; but to waste efficient men was an entirely different matter. He had to weigh the advantages to be gained by bringing out the *Philadelphia* against the probable loss of a complete unit in his fighting forces.

"He did a deal of thinking you may be sure and to help him he decided to run down to Tripoli and have a look at conditions with his own eyes. The *Constitution*, accompanied by the *Vixen* and *Enterprise*, went off on a southerly course from Sicily to do a bit of reconnoitring. On the way the *Enterprise* captured a Tripolitan ketch; a small, two masted, square-rigged vessel which had been built in France, seized by the English, and probably sold to Jussuf Caramalli. This

queer little craft was old, a bad sailor and of little use as a fighter. Neverthelesss she came to a glorious end under the Stars and Stripes.

“Well, the Commodore had a look at Tripoli. Then he went back to Syracuse with a plan already matured to deal with the *Philadelphia* situation.”

## CHAPTER X

IT was somewhat past eight o'clock in the evening. Grandmother Shepard was having a bridge party and, as Mr. Shepard did not play, he and Joe were back in the workshop, sitting quietly in the half light of a shaded electric lamp on the table. The small ships on the bookshelves, only dimly visible, gave the impression of real vessels seen at a great distance.

Outside a pale moon began to gather brightness as the fading rays of the afterglow grayed in the west. A stiff land breeze, which had been blowing all day, had died away with the setting sun, leaving a gradually diminishing surf to pound the shore. Every now and then an extra heavy wave would break with a crash and Joe, sitting beside a screened open window, could hear the water hissing up the shelving sands. It was very peaceful and he waited, content to be quiet, while his grandfather smoked an after-dinner cigar slowly and thoughtfully.

"Curious," remarked the older man, and then, as if recollecting that he was not alone, he went on: "I was struck by the unaccountable way one thought leads to another. I had been going over in my mind the problems of life and death which confronted Commodore Preble long years ago in the Mediterranean. Speculating upon what his feelings might have been, I recalled a talk I once had with a dear friend of mine who is a surgeon. He is eminent in his profession; so skilful that his services are in such constant demand that he is literally wearing himself out with work. On the sur-

face he is somewhat gruff. A man of few words, and I have heard people, who should have known better, speak of him as 'a cold-blooded butcher.' Nothing could be farther from the truth. He is so tender in his sympathies that, even after years of practice, he has to school himself to inflict the pain and suffering that must almost always accompany his healing. 'Shepard,' he said to me, one day, 'I wish I had never gone into surgery. Every time a patient comes to me I have a battle with my feelings. I don't want to hurt them. I hate it like poison, yet I must do it to save their lives.'

"That's why he's so gruff. He needs to surround himself with a hard shell of seeming indifference; for, in reality, he is as soft-hearted as a woman. We mustn't be too ready to judge people by externals. Admirals and generals are not stony-hearted Molochs who rejoice in having their men killed. Their profession demands a solution of problems in which the life and death of the individual is not of supreme importance. Their feelings may be just as tender as those of my friend, the surgeon, who can think only of the ultimate good of his patients. So it is with a commanding officer. His first consideration is for the security of his country which he has sworn to serve.

"So we come back to Commodore Preble and his plans for preventing the *Philadelphia*'s being used by the enemy. That was the most important factor in his problem and at almost any risk must be solved. Undoubtedly he saw from the beginning that an attempt to bring the frigate out of the harbor would be a foolhardy enterprise. It was barely possible, with good luck, to destroy her and yet get his men back without too severe a loss. The risk was enormous. An at-

tempt might easily end in disaster for all concerned, as the Commodore very well knew. The decision rested with him and must be made without regard to his own sensibilities. I am sure he had grown to have something of a fatherly interest in those good boys of his. They were so eager, so willing to play the game as he was teaching it, that it is hard to believe that he had not developed a fondness for them. Still he was called upon to send them into extreme peril with the chances greatly in favor of his never seeing them again. I do believe that some such thoughts as these were in his mind, even though he did not speak of them. He sent for Stewart and Decatur and, doubtless, was more irritable than usual.

“It is certain that any of the officers in that little squadron would have hailed with joy the opportunity to take a hand in this proposed expedition. The Commodore may have been somewhat embarrassed to decide the delicate question of which one of them should command this desperate enterprise. He did not want to stir up jealousies among these high-spirited young men; that is one of the easiest methods of ruining team work; and he sent for Stewart and Decatur, they being the two most directly concerned.

“The *Constitution* was back in Syracuse by this time and Commodore Preble gave his orders in few words. He explained that he had chosen Mr. Decatur to lead the adventure because it had chanced that this gentleman had been the first with whom the matter had been discussed. This was the sole reason for the decision.

“‘Thank you, sir,’ Decatur remarked, really meaning ‘Hooray!’ repeated several times.

"Stewart, the senior lieutenant, was disappointed; still he didn't sulk. In nicely official language he explained his sentiments:

"'That's fine for Decatur, sir, but hang it all, I can help, can't I?'

"'You can,' the Commodore told Stewart. 'You will stand by in the *Siren* to cover their retreat when Mr. Decatur and his men come back.' He didn't add, 'if they ever do.' It wasn't necessary. Moreover, in an affair of this sort failure need not be discussed.

"It is possible that in the excitement of anticipation and the enthusiasm of the moment Lieutenant Decatur wanted to go back to his own vessel and start for Tripoli then and there. The Commodore, however, was not ready to dismiss him yet. The planning of this affair was not to be trusted to the impetuosity of a young lieutenant. He was to follow orders, which were emphatic. First of all then, no attempt should be made to bring the *Philadelphia* out of the harbor. There were limits to the risks Commodore Preble would permit his officers to take. The frigate was to be burned where she lay, a sufficiently hazardous undertaking.

"'Understand, Mr. Decatur?'

"'Aye, aye, sir,' regretfully.

"The raiding party was to sail in the small ketch which had been taken into our navy and renamed the *Intrepid*. Her appearance would not create any suspicions in the minds of the Turks that her crew was American. Moreover there was an advantage in using so small a vessel. She could be rowed if the wind should fail at a critical moment.

"The *Siren* was to be disguised as a merchantman. Her duty would be that of a reserve force. To act in support of

the *Intrepid* and to help the latter's escape after the *Philadelphia* had been fired. The two vessels must appear to be sailing independently and must act as if they were strangers to each other.

"Mr. Decatur was to choose his own men. These would be volunteers from the officers and crew of the *Enterprise*, with a few extra midshipmen from the *Constitution*. Preparations were to be begun immediately and, until the last moment, not a word was to be said of the proposed expedition. Even the log of the *Constitution* was to make no reference to the matter until everything was ready. This was to guard against possible gossip in the town of Syracuse, which might find its way to Tripoli.

"This was the plan, and the preliminaries were carried out rapidly. A quantity of inflammable material was placed on the *Intrepid*. Her rigging was overhauled, and provisions and water for her extra complement stowed aboard. The *Siren* made ready to hide her gun ports once they were away, and by February 3, 1804, the two vessels were equipped for the perilous task ahead. On the afternoon of that day Lieutenant Decatur assembled his ship's company and told them that Commodore Preble had honored them by entrusting a most important duty to them. He explained the nature of the business, pointed out the dangers to be encountered and then asked for volunteers. Every officer, man and boy aboard the *Enterprise* stepped forward eagerly. It was a fine compliment to their young commander. Anticipating this very thing the Commodore had sent over five midshipmen from the *Constitution* to report to Mr. Decatur as had been planned. It was impossible to strip the *Enterprise* of her entire crew; so her commander selected

sixty-two of the most vigorous fellows and the remainder, with as few officers as could manage, were left aboard to look after the schooner, no doubt grumbling at their hard luck. The rest were ordered to the *Intrepid* at once, and they tumbled into her with cheers.

“That same evening the ketch put to sea, having aboard seventy-four persons including Salvadore Catalano as sailing master, he being familiar with the harbor for which they were bound. It was a great many more passengers than could be accommodated comfortably on that little 45 ton craft, and to add to their hardships, much of the food was spoiled, so that for a time they had little more than bread and water. Hardly a fighting diet, yet no one complained. They were too busy talking over the game ahead to think of anything else.

“The *Siren* followed, and by the afternoon of the 9th, they were approaching Tripoli. Not wishing to be observed together, the ketch went on alone and by night was within a mile of the town, where she anchored. The *Siren*, now disguised as planned, drew up after nightfall, remaining somewhat farther out to sea. On both vessels there were eager crews, peering over the bulwarks toward the lights on the shore, speculating upon the probable position of the *Philadelphia*.

“The weather, which up to this time had been pleasant, underwent a change. The clouds gathered and the darkness grew intense. It seemed an ideal evening for the attempt, and Lieutenant Decatur began to make ready to enter the harbor. Suddenly, as the winds usually arrive off that coast, a heavy breeze began to blow; and, although the worse the weather the more likely they were to surprise the enemy,

the increasing violence of the gale made an attempt that night somewhat doubtful. Catalano advised against it, saying that in all probability the waves would be breaking in the channel between the rocks guarding the entrance.

“To the impulsive Decatur delay was trying, and it is to his credit that he resolved to be prudent. ‘After all,’ he said to himself, ‘what we want is to burn the *Philadelphia*, and we can’t do that if we are wrecked getting into the harbor.’ However, to make sure that it was impossible, he sent Midshipman Morris with a few men in a small boat to reconnoitre. This young officer approached the entrance as closely as he dared in the darkness and discovered broken water across the passage, as Catalano had predicted. He returned to report his findings, but by this time the storm was so severe that those aboard the ketch were fearful of being blown ashore and more than anxious to get away from that treacherous coast. Mr. Morris’s information was not needed. There was no little difficulty in getting him and his men aboard the *Intrepid*, and in the operation their boat was stove in, so high were the seas running. Lieutenant Decatur ordered the anchor up and the none too seaworthy ketch was headed for open water.

“Meanwhile the *Siren*, expecting that the attempt would be made to burn the *Philadelphia* that night, stood in during the darkness, anchoring somewhat to seaward of the *Intrepid*. She lowered her boats, which were to cover the retreat of the raiding party, and was prepared for anything that might happen. The storm, as we know, made the attempt impracticable; and its increasing fury caused Lieutenant Stewart considerable anxiety for the safety of his own vessel. He tried to bring up his anchor only to find after

several hours of useless effort, that it would not budge; and at length, having been pitched about at the end of the cable for several hours, he was obliged to cut loose. No word had been exchanged with the *Intrepid* and Lieutenant Stewart was extremely worried about what was happening to her. At length he saw her lights as she ran out, and, certain that his little consort had abandoned the project, he, too, made haste to seek safety in the open sea. It was a disappointing beginning, especially as the night had seemed so favorable for the enterprise before the violent winds began to blow. Nevertheless there was a feeling of thanksgiving mixed with their chagrin. Had they been any nearer the coast, or had the ketch gone inside the harbor, she would most certainly have been trapped with all hands.

“Luckily daybreak found them out of sight of the town and they were certain that no one had observed them together. Thereafter for six days the storm raged, and there was considerable fear that the ketch would founder. She was old, and they must have nursed her through the high seas somewhat anxiously. It was an exceedingly disagreeable time for those seventy odd people aboard her who had little to eat and, in all probability, no dry place to sleep. The *Siren* managed to keep in touch with her and together they rode out the gale in a partially protected gulf along the coast to the southeast.

“Finally, on the 15th of February, the tempest subsided and that night the American vessels were once more off the harbor of Tripoli. They went close enough inshore to ascertain where they were, and, finding their position not suited to their purpose, hauled off to sea to avoid observation. The next day the weather being mild and the wind favorable, it

was determined to make an attempt in the evening to destroy the *Philadelphia*.

“Calculating that they were abreast of the town although still out of sight of it, the *Intrepid* went ahead leaving the *Siren* to follow. Before separating, Lieutenant Stewart, feeling that the attacking party should be strengthened, sent a boat with additional men under command of a midshipman. With these, the entire force numbered, according to the account of Charles Morris, eighty persons all told. Accounts differ, within one or two men, of the exact number engaged on our side. At best it was a small band to attack the frigate, which was believed to be fully manned by corsairs.

“It is likely, on the way in, that Lieutenant Decatur reviewed the details of their plan of attack. These were in no way complicated and depended almost entirely upon their success in bringing the ketch alongside the *Philadelphia*. The moment that happened, the entire company was to carry the spar-deck and then systematically clear the ship of the enemy. This accomplished, the party was to divide into groups, under individual officers, to place the inflammable material at various designated spots on the vessel. This part was to be most thoroughly performed while Lieutenant Decatur, with fifteen men, guarded the upper deck from an attack by water. Certain of these small parties were to go to the berth-deck and forward store-rooms; others to the ward-room and steerage; still others were to descend to the cockpit and after storage-rooms. A small force was to be left aboard the ketch, while the *Intrepid*’s launch and the *Siren*’s cutter were to lay up close to the ship’s side to prevent, if possible, the pirates from swimming ashore. No firearms were to be used except as a last resort, and all was to be

done with as little commotion as possible in order not to alarm the enemy in the town until the last moment. That they might know each other as they fought in the dark, the Americans chose '*Philadelphia*' as their watchword.

"This program was simple and straightforward. To be sure, they were likely to encounter aboard the frigate many times their own number of corsairs who boasted of their fierceness in hand to hand encounters. To counteract the handicap of numbers they counted upon surprise and the impetuosity of their attack. One condition was vital to their plan. They must be in actual contact with the frigate, and there was, of course, considerable doubt that they would be permitted to approach it. This was the hazardous factor against their success. Should the Turks take alarm and open fire upon the little ketch, the chances were greatly in favor of their vessel being sunk before they could reach their objective.

"Apparently alone, for the *Siren* remained out of sight during daylight, the *Intrepid* approached the town. As she drew in, those aboard caught sight of the *Philadelphia* lying a short mile within the entrance of the harbor. It was an interesting moment when they discovered her, for until then her exact position had not been known. She was still without her foremast, which Captain Bainbridge had cut down. Many of her spars and her running gear were laid across the bulwarks, and only her standing rigging on the main and mizzen masts was intact. All of her guns, however, were in the ports; and, they were to discover later, each one was loaded.

"It was a mild evening for that time of the year and

a breeze blew gently from the sea. The water was smooth and the ketch scarcely made a ripple at her bow as she drew gradually in toward the shore. The whole world seemed most peaceful, and when night fell a pale moon gave a faint gleam of light over the harbor. In spite of their slow progress, due to a diminishing wind, Lieutenant Decatur decided that, even at the rate they were going, the *Intrepid* would arrive at an earlier hour than he desired. He wanted the enemy to have settled down for the night before he struck at them. If he surprised them as they slept, so much the better; he therefore ordered drags to be lowered over the stern to hold his boat back, fearing that to shorten sail, for no obvious reason, was likely to arouse suspicion in the minds of those who, without doubt, were watching the *Intrepid* as she sailed so deliberately toward the tranquil harbor.

"At about ten o'clock they passed the ledge of rock guarding the entrance to the west. They had less than a mile to go and I fancy the sailing master, Catalano, was at the helm himself, with Lieutenant Decatur beside him, now and then murmuring instructions in a low tone. A few men, whose ostensible occupation was to work the boat, looked over the rail with apparent indifference. The others of the party lay flat upon the deck under the shadow of the bulwarks, the officers beside their several groups, naked cutlasses close at hand. Except for the gentle ripple of the water beside the drifting ketch there was no sound. The men seemed scarcely to breathe, as in utter silence the *Intrepid* drew nearer and nearer to the *Philadelphia*.

"Presently the high side of the frigate loomed ahead of

them in the faint light of the moon. They were now near enough to see the guns within the ports, and Lieutenant Decatur guessed that they were shotted.

“‘Lay us aboard her bows,’ he murmured to Catalano, for with the ketch in that position she was out of range of the cannon.

“By this time the wind had almost completely died away. An occasional puff pushed them on with a scarcely perceptible movement, and while they were still some distance away, a hail reached them across the water asking who they were.

“‘A merchantman from Malta,’ answered Catalano.

“Apparently this reply was satisfactory. A friendly word was returned and the sailing master shouted the remainder of his prepared tale. They had been roughly handled in the recent storm. Their anchors had been lost. Might they tie up to the frigate for the night?

“Permission was given, and the little ketch drifted on. Under Decatur’s low toned directions, Catalano grew voluble and shouted lustily to those aboard the frigate. He described their struggle with the storm, invented a cargo stowed in the hold and replied to bantering criticism of his seamanship with melancholy good humor, all the while keeping the attention of the Turks upon the wretchedness of his condition. And the ketch crept on while the voices echoed back and forth in the night.

“Of those who lay upon the deck no man moved. From above they must have given the appearance of inanimate lumps, shapeless as bags of coffee. They made no sound. Impassively they awaited the moment when the word

should be given and the silence shattered by the clash of steel.

“They were soon so close that in another second the ketch would bring up against the bows of the frigate. Those who watched and could anticipate the instant of their attack, must have held their breaths in expectation of the violent change which would occur as the two vessels touched. They could see a corsair moving forward with a line ready to cast, and prepared to receive it. A row of turbaned heads gazed at them over the bulwarks, as the watch idly noted the snail-like progress of the innocent looking ketch. It was then that a wandering puff of wind came from the land and the bow of the *Intrepid* swung away from the frigate. This brought her parallel with the double row of guns, a sure target for a broadside. It was a perilous moment. Decatur murmured a word to Catalano, who ordered a boat out to fetch the line from the bows of the ship. The men moved unhurriedly to execute the command, and under the eyes of they could not tell how many pirates the company, prone upon the deck, waited. Think how slowly the seconds must have passed to those men stretched out on the hard planking, not daring to move, gaining a knowledge of what was going on only by guessing at what had brought the orders they heard, their faces hidden in their folded arms while their muscles ached from the strain of holding a motionless position. Within pistol shot bristled the guns of the frigate; not much farther away were a fleet of galleys and gunboats, armed for instant action; ashore, scores of cannon pointed down to command the entire harbor. A tense moment in which a false move, a hurried ges-

ture even, might have awakened suspicion in the minds of the swarthy enemy; and once suspicion was aroused the corsairs did not delay to parley. In less time than I can tell it the *Intrepid* and her brave band of sailors would have been blown to atoms."

Mr. Shepard paused, possibly to picture the scene in his mind's eye. Joe, looking out of the window, saw the ocean white and mysterious under the rays of a rising moon. It must have been just such a night as this of which his grandfather was talking. He tried to realize what he himself might have felt had he been a member of Decatur's band, waiting, as it seemed, upon the edge of death, while the ticking seconds marked the slowly passing time. Would he have been listening for the first cry of amazement uttered by one of the corsairs, who, gazing down from the *Philadelphia*, detected a movement among the shadows? He wondered if he could have stayed as still as a mouse in such circumstances. Perhaps. He couldn't tell, and yet he imagined that it was not unlike that curious moment that precedes the first play in a big football game; that instant of waiting just after the referee has blown his whistle, when the players scarcely breathe and even the throng in the crowded stands is hushed. It must have been something like that, Joe thought, only enormously more tense. That was where nerve counted—and mustn't those fellows on the little *Intrepid* have had it to burn? Mr. Shepard's voice broke in upon these musings:

"As coolly as though they were intent upon the common tasks of their everyday work, the men went about the business of securing the line, while Catalano continued to talk to the turbaned heads above him. The hawser came aboard

at length and once more, an inch at a time, the men tugging at the rope, the *Intrepid* approached the bows of the *Philadelphia*. The ketch was still possibly twenty feet from the frigate when a loud cry shattered the calm:

“‘Americanos!’

“It was a shout of warning, repeated again and again from one end of the ship to the other.

“‘Americanos!’

“Surprise and a hint of fear could be heard in the tones of the startled Moslems, suddenly awakened to face an unexpected peril. Figures appeared at the ports chattering excitedly and only half seen in the moonlight. The patter of running feet on the decks mingled with hastily given orders to cast off the line, and a mass of men raced for the bows of the *Philadelphia*.

“They were too late. At the instant of discovery Lieutenant Decatur had called to life the unmoving figures on the *Intrepid*’s deck. Still in grim silence they seized the rope and with a mighty pull brought the ketch afoul of the frigate. Up her sides they swarmed, cutlasses in hand, behind Decatur and Charles Morris, who were the first to gain a footing on the *Philadelphia*. In deadly earnest they set to work to clear the ship of their fanatical enemy.

“So impetuous was the onslaught of the Americans that the corsairs retreated precipitately. Those who were forward rushed aft through the waist to the quarter-deck, pursued relentlessly by Decatur’s men. Driven to the after rail, the pirates who had not fallen leapt into the waters of the harbor. In two or three minutes the spar-deck was secured; from here they went below to carry out with the same methodical precision the task they had accomplished

so speedily above. In ten minutes Lieutenant Decatur was back on deck in complete possession of the ship. He sent up a rocket to notify the men on the *Siren* that all was well, then gave the order to fetch the combustibles from the ketch and set the *Philadelphia* alight.

"I have no doubt that Decatur had a momentary feeling of regret that he had orders to burn the ship, which would have made so useful an addition to the squadron. This attack had been so rapid and so successful that he must have felt fairly certain of his ability to take her out of the harbor. As yet there had been no hint from the shore that their raid had been discovered, and the temptation to save so fine a frigate was great. True, there was no wind. Only by manning the sweeps on the ketch and towing the *Philadelphia* could she be carried away from under the guns of the shore batteries. Yet there *was* a chance, which he most probably would have seized had his orders not been definite. Commodore Preble had wisely limited the activities of his impetuous young officer. Up to this point the older man had counted the hazards and had seen a promise of success. To increase the risk further would be to jeopardize the entire undertaking.

"If indeed Lieutenant Decatur really had a thought of exceeding his orders it must have been a very fleeting impulse. Had he yielded to it and by good fortune secured the *Philadelphia* without a scratch, he would have needed great courage to face the Commodore with the report that he had seen fit to disobey his precise instructions. Of course he did no such thing. The ship was set afire, and so quickly was this accomplished that in less than half an hour from the time they leaped upon her decks, in that first wild rush,

the flames were pouring out of ports and hatchways. So rapidly did the dry wood burn that those whose duty had taken them to the hold experienced great difficulty in finding their way to the deck again through the dense smoke.

“Thus was accomplished, without a hitch, one of the most famous adventures of its kind in history. Assured that the frigate was doomed to total destruction, Decatur ordered his followers back into the *Intrepid*, and the few moments that followed their return to the ketch were perhaps the most perilous they experienced. The holding line at the bow had been cut, letting the little vessel drift astern. Here a part of her rigging fouled, and she was held fast to the roaring frigate. The flames poured out of the ports beside them and for a few moments it looked as if the *Intrepid* also would catch fire. With some difficulty, using their cutlasses, they hacked away the ropes and, free at length, manned the sweeps and rowed away from that danger just in time.

“Only then, as they drew off from the fiercely burning *Philadelphia*, did they relax their mood of grim determination. To be sure they were still under the guns of the shore batteries. There would be a mile or two to go before they reached the comparatively safe waters outside the bay. A chance shot might easily sink the ketch under them as they tugged at the long oars. To these things they gave no thought. They had accomplished what they had been sent to do. The *Philadelphia*, in flames from cockpit to tops, was no longer a menace. In the exultation of the moment they lifted their voices and sent three cheers of triumph echoing across the waters, rising above the roar of the conflagration and reaching the ears of those ashore. It seemed as if this great shout of gay defiance was needed to stir the

Tripolitans out of their state of amazement, for at once the batteries of the forts opened fire. Curiously enough the only return to this cannonade came from the shore-pointing guns on the *Philadelphia*. As the flames heated the cannon, one after another of them discharged, and, unattended, the American frigate sent a few shots on her own account into the enemy, as if at the end of her career she strove to even the score with those pirates who had brought her to such a pass.

“Aboard the ketch no heed was given to the sudden activity on the part of the corsairs. In plain view by the light given off by the blazing ship, the *Intrepid* moved steadily and unhurriedly on its way to the open sea. Around her, making red splashes in the water as they struck, came a flock of cannon balls, one of which passed through her mainsail. The men laughed and rowed on, gay and voluble from the reaction following those tense moments of stern hand to hand fighting. They scorned Jussuf Caramalli and his people. Calm and unafraid, they passed out of the circle of waning light into safety beyond the harbor.”

## CHAPTER XI

THESE talks between Joe and Mr. Shepard were by no means continuous. There were periods when days elapsed without the two being alone together. Friends of the younger man would wheel him off to the beach at the bathing hour or spend long afternoons on the porch, talking over college affairs. So the weeks passed rapidly. His leg healed without complications and the time came when the invalid's chair was banished and Joe hobbled about on crutches, greatly rejoiced over the fact that he was no longer dependent upon someone to push him from place to place.

During these intervals it had occurred to him to wonder a bit at his own reactions to this story of the old ship. Heretofore he had been concerned with what was to happen and not at all with what had happened. His athletic activities had brought him into contact with men of similar inclinations, and their discussions had had to do, in the main, with games soon to come or just passed. And now, because of a broken leg, here he was, listening with keen interest to talk of men long since dead. History, in fact. A subject he believed to be concerned with events and individuals quite unlike any in his experience. Yet these chaps Decatur, Hull, Somers and the rest of them, were all young fellows not much older than he. Wherein were they different from the men he knew in and out of college? He concluded that they weren't. That they wore lace and silk knickerbockers instead of coonskin coats and Oxford bags did not alter their essential characteristics. He could think of no reason to suppose

that the officers commanding the early American Navy in their little wooden ships were unlike those who walked the quarter-decks of our steel dreadnaughts. As far as the individual was concerned he was just as dead if he were hit by an old-fashioned 24-pound ball as he would be if a 16-inch shell exploded beside him. It took the same kind of nerve to face the one as the other, and what really counted then, as now, was courage. When you got down to brass tacks, Joe concluded, it was courage a fellow had to have to be decent and to do as well as he was able whatever his job was at the moment. That was what was needed on the football field; not during the games, with thousands of people cheering in the stands, but on the practice field, when you were as tired as a dog and wanted to quit. It was at such times, while the coach was driving you to make the same play over and over again until you were sick of it all, that, if you weren't a quitter, you gritted your teeth and went at it harder than ever. As he reached this point in his speculations Joe gave a low laugh.

"What do you find so amusing?" asked Mr. Shepard, seated on the opposite side of the work table.

"I was reminded of what you said the other day about one thought leading to another. I began off the port of Tripoli in 1804 and ended up on a twentieth century football field."

"What took you on that long journey?"

"Just coming to the conclusion that those young officers of Commodore Preble's must have been a good deal like a bunch of college athletes."

"Undoubtedly, and they were all on the same team."

"Yes," said Joe, rather soberly, "it was a team all right; but it was a mighty hard game they had to play."

"I don't believe they thought much about that."

"No, probably not, while they were all in it together. It was when one of them was off by himself that the others counted the risks, I imagine. I was wondering what Lieutenant Stewart was feeling when his friend Decatur disappeared in the *Intrepid*. I'll bet he walked up and down the quarter-deck trying to guess what was happening. He had done everything he could and was all ready to help if the little ketch came back. After that he must have had a lot of time to speculate upon whether it ever would come back or not. It wasn't only the success of the raid that worried him. He must have been fond of Decatur. You know you do get fond of fellows you work with."

"Of course!" exclaimed Mr. Shepard heartily. "That was one of the things Commodore Preble was most anxious to attain, and he was so successful that there is no record of trouble having occurred among his officers while he was in command. You are quite right in thinking they had an affection for each other, and undoubtedly Lieutenant Stewart spent several anxious hours keeping his eyes fastened on the shore to catch the first gleam of that rocket Decatur was to send up to signal their success. When it came, he gave a shout of joy and ran below to find one to set off in answer. When he returned, after only a moment or two, the red glow of the flames already was showing in the ports of the *Philadelphia*, and a little later the doomed frigate was blazing to the mastheads. There was then no doubt in Stewart's mind that the object of the undertaking had been accomplished. Would

the gallant band return? He peered shoreward, and you may be sure that the flashing of the guns on the forts did not allay his anxiety. Much time was to pass before the uncertainty was ended. Then, swinging at the sweeps, the crew of the *Intrepid* brought their little vessel into view. As the *Siren*'s boats picked them up, Stewart could hear cheers and knew that all was well; and presently, all aglow with the excitement of success, Lieutenant Decatur ran up the ladder of the *Siren* to report to his superior officer.

“It was all done decorously and with great pains to observe the niceties of naval etiquette, quite as it should be. ‘The *Philadelphia* is burned, sir, and only one of my men was hurt.’ That would have been the gist of Decatur’s summary of the night’s adventure.

“Excellent. Mr. Decatur. We sail at once for Syracuse.”

“Perhaps alone in the cabin they relaxed and, with a flood of eager words, Decatur told those personal details with which the service does not concern itself officially. Only to men who have served do the dry words recounting brave deeds have much meaning. They fill in between the lines the extent of the danger gallantly faced, and by those who know, the difficulties which have been overcome are realized. A medal of honor has a significance to them which we civilians cannot appreciate.

“So, after their glorious expedition, the *Siren* and the *Intrepid* sailed back to Syracuse, where they came to anchor on the 19th. They were received with salutes and congratulations and possibly Commodore Preble had a word or two of commendation for his young lieutenant. I don’t believe he was excessive in his praise. It wasn’t his idea nor is it the idea of the navy today, to grow excited and hysterical over the ex-

ploits of any individual who, as they view it, simply does his duty. And their idea of a man's duty to the service is a comprehensive one. They expect him to do anything he is told and to do it successfully. You see they aren't concerned with personal glory any more than is your football coach. They serve their country, and no task is too difficult. They uphold the honor of the flag, and no sacrifice is too great. There is no finer code of conduct; and, from the days of Edward Preble to this, it has been the code of the United States Navy.

"You mustn't get the impression, however, that this exploit was viewed as an everyday affair by the members of the little squadron. They talked a lot about it among themselves. Again and again the enlisted men recounted all the details of their experience and the upshot of this was the development of a decided scorn for the fighting qualities of the corsairs. Our sailors came to the conclusion that, no matter what the odds, they could beat these fierce-looking pirates, and they were impatient to get at it.

"Much as everyone in the squadron would have liked to start the fighting, they were forced to wait until summer for favorable weather. Meanwhile Commodore Preble was extremely busy, and the *Constitution* was always on the go. The other vessels were kept on patrol duty before Tripoli, relieving each other from time to time and returning to Syracuse or Malta to replenish their supplies.

"Day after day the training of the crews went on, both to ease the monotony of their regular duty and to fit the sailors and gunners for the work ahead. The Commodore kept an eye on this business, and the flag-ship was likely to turn up at any time to see how the squadron fared. On one day it might be at Tunis the *Constitution* would stop,

hovering off the harbor with the flag flying conspicuously to let the people there have a look at a 44-gun frigate from the U. S. A. and speculate upon what damage she might do if they didn't behave themselves. (The Dey of Tunis, you remember, had complained that he hadn't been sufficiently bribed and was inclined to be disagreeable about it.)

“Then the Commodore would stand off for Tripoli, perhaps to relieve one of the brigs or schooners for a week or so; then on to Gibraltar, Algiers or Tangier. It was a part of his plan to give the impression to all of these more or less unfriendly Moslems that he didn't trust them any farther than he could see them and that he didn't propose to let them get out of sight.

“And, as it is hardly necessary to point out, he was busy preparing to attack Tripoli as soon as the weather gave him a chance. He was much concerned with his equipment and, realizing how deficient he was in the matter of gunboats, scouted about to see if he could find any.

“He discovered that the King of Naples had a few lying at Messina above Syracuse and he at once opened negotiations for their purchase. This took the *Constitution* to Naples, where the Commodore not only secured the boats but cashed a draft or two on our Treasury and thus obtained money he greatly needed. It is probable also that he bought a number of heavy guns, for the ship's armament was changed somewhat to meet the exigencies of her service against the heavy walls of Tripoli.

“Having secured six gunboats and two bomb-vessels the commander was off to Messina to pick them up and start the work of getting them into shape. You see he was not idle, and with all his comings and goings, he still had time

to think of Captain Bainbridge and the other American captives held by Jussuf Caramalli. He tried to negotiate for an exchange of prisoners, but failed. He did, however, manage to send our men clothing, food and money, so that in a measure their sufferings were relieved. Nor was he concerned only with their physical well-being. Captain Bainbridge in particular was much depressed in spirit over the loss of the *Philadelphia* and Commodore Preble was at pains to write letters to cheer him.

“In this kindly thoughtfulness we have another side-light upon the Commodore’s character. He was a hard task-master with a quick, uncertain temper. He exacted a prompt and unwavering obedience to his orders. He accepted no excuses and listened to no arguments. Yet no man in the squadron worked harder, and the welfare of his officers and sailors was never out of his thoughts. There were many hardships to be endured. They were so short of clothing that many were ill from exposure. Food was scarce and none too good. Medical supplies were almost impossible to obtain. The Commodore never rested in his efforts to relieve these conditions and spared himself no personal inconvenience in seeing that everything possible was done to ease those who suffered. There is plenty of evidence to show why it was that, in spite of his rough exterior, the men in the squadron grew to have a warm regard and admiration for their commanding officer.

“There was still another element in the situation to add to the Commodore’s difficulties, which was the more exasperating because it was entirely unnecessary. You will recall that all this time Great Britain was carrying on a war with France. Because of this, there was a considerable Eng-

lish fleet assembled in the Mediterranean the officers of which might very easily have helped us in our war with Tripoli. At least they might have refrained from increasing our embarrassments. As a matter of fact they hampered our efforts by bribing our sailors to desert; they ridiculed our flag; spoke slightly of our ships and were loud in expressions of contempt for our navy and its officers. It was because of this, to a great extent, that Commodore Preble chose Syracuse for his base of operations rather than an English port. He was forced to issue drastic orders to his young men to refrain in all circumstances from having anything to do with the Englishmen who were encountered in neutral ports at which our ships might be obliged to touch.

“There have come down to us records of many incidents which illustrate the sort of thing the British officers were doing whenever they found a chance. One of these is interesting because of the men involved:

“It seems that a party of English naval officers landed at Malta one evening and, knowing that we had a vessel or two in the harbor, they anticipated a meeting with a similar party of Americans. One of these Englishmen, having gained a considerable reputation as a duellist, boasted to his friends that he would ‘bag one of these boorish Yankees’ before morning. Intent upon making trouble, they set out to find some of our chaps and, seeing a group of midshipmen entering a playhouse, they followed into the lobby. With the obvious aim of bringing on a quarrel, the Englishman deliberately jostled one of the Americans, who happened to be Joseph Bainbridge, a brother of the captain held prisoner at Tripoli. Young Bainbridge, remembering his strict orders

to avoid any conflict with officers from the British Navy, and assuming that this rudeness was an accident, politely excused himself. Whereupon the Englishman pushed his elbow into the Yankee's face in so marked a way that the insult could not be overlooked. The two exchanged cards and a duel was arranged to take place on the beach the following morning at nine o'clock.

"Bainbridge, knowing that his opponent had a reputation for invariably killing his man, considered himself as good as dead, and decided to spend the night ashore although he was expected to report aboard his ship at a set hour. It didn't seem to him that it would make a great deal of difference one way or the other a few minutes after nine o'clock the next day, whether he had obeyed orders or not. The thing that did matter was that he should meet his opponent and do his best to show a proper resentment for the bullying conduct of this Englishman.

"This plan of his was frustrated. An American lieutenant happening along and, hearing of this encounter, promptly took command of this party of junior officers. He ordered them back to their ship and went with them to see that they all arrived.

"Young Bainbridge was considerably embarrassed. Having arranged to fight a duel next morning there could be no excuse for his failing to appear. He would be called a coward and would forfeit the respect of his brothers in the service if he were not on hand to receive the fatal bullet he fully expected to put an end to his career. Yet he was convinced that, once aboard his ship, he would not be permitted to land the following day. He was in a desperate

state of mind as he sat in the stern sheets of the boat, and was seriously contemplating diving overboard when the lieutenant leaned over and spoke to him in a low tone:

“ ‘Mr. Bainbridge, I shall go ashore with you tomorrow morning at nine o’clock, if you will allow me the honor.’

“Here indeed was an unexpected turn to the affair, for the lieutenant was Stephen Decatur, and to be seconded by him in a duel was a distinction. Moreover, this encouragement evidently put young Bainbridge on his mettle and gave him a confidence he had lacked. The two went to the meeting on the beach next day and the American lad shot the English bully through the heart, and that was that. There were for a time many such incidents, until the British naval officers learned from sad experience that Americans were neither cowards nor clumsy with their weapons.

“You must be convinced by this time that Commodore Preble’s task was by no means a light one, yet, notwithstanding ill health and the most discouraging conditions, he pushed on the work of preparation and by the summer of 1804 he was as ready as he could be to begin operations. He had added six gunboats and two bomb-vessels to his fighting force, and Lieutenant Stewart had captured a 16-gun brig which had been taken into our navy and rechristened the *Scourge*. The command of this acquisition had been given to Lieutenant Dent, who, prior to this, had been acting captain of the *Constitution*. These boats together with the *Siren*, *Argus*, *Vixen*, *Nautilus* and *Enterprise* composed our entire fighting force, and on July 25th they lay off Tripoli ready to begin the delayed attack.

“It wouldn’t be a bad idea to take a glance at the enemy

and see what his strength was. First of all we must remember that he lay very snugly within a sheltered harbor guarded by a treacherous approach that could be safely navigated only in favorable winds. The town was protected by a heavy masonry wall with numerous batteries set at advantageous points. Of heavy guns Jussuf Caramalli mounted 115 against a maximum of 48 with which we could batter his defenses. His war vessels included nineteen or twenty excellent gunboats, with a combined armament almost equal to that carried by the *Constitution*. In addition to these were two galleys, two schooners and a brig, all heavily armed and manned. Of gunners, soldiers and sailors there were about 25,000 Turks and Arabs; while we, counting officers, men and powder boys, numbered 1060 all told. The odds appeared to be considerably against us."

"Yes, but we had the nerve!" Joe exclaimed suddenly.

"Well," Mr. Shepard went on, "it has never been said that the Tripolitans lacked courage. They had a reputation for being very fierce fighters and even after our burning of the *Philadelphia* they still retained a scorn of our ability to battle against them successfully. Don't forget that our dealings with Jussuf had given the impression that we really were afraid of him. That bolstered up the corsairs' confidence. What they did lack, however, was training and discipline. We shot straighter than they did, and our effort was more concentrated. Also we were commanded by much abler officers. Nevertheless Commodore Preble, with the means at his command, was undertaking a well-nigh hopeless campaign. The Tripolitans could always take refuge under the heavy guns of their forts, and all we had to combat these

with were the cannon on the *Constitution* and the two mortar boats, which latter proved of little value because the ammunition for them was defective.

“And, much as he would have liked it, Commodore Preble could not lead his squadron to attack Tripoli now that they were assembled for that purpose. A very important factor had always to be reckoned with in those days. That was the state of the weather and the direction of the wind. We may say, in general, that if it was blowing toward the shore the danger of a ship not being able to get out again was too great a risk to run. Only when the breeze was stirring more or less from the land was it safe to venture within the harbor. These facts should be kept in mind. They were particularly important because, as we have seen, a fierce gale was always likely to spring up, often without warning. So the very elements seemed to be on the side of Jussuf Caramalli.

“It was not until three days after they arrived that the squadron dared to anchor. They ran in to about three miles or so of the town and the Commodore was about to issue orders for an attack when, as usual, the wind switched around to the northeast, stirring up a nasty sea which threatened to wash the ships ashore. Preble hoped it might die away, but it didn’t. At six o’clock, he was forced to signal his squadron to up-anchor and make for safety in the open sea.

“This gale lasted for three days and so severe was it that the *Constitution* had her lower sails torn away, although they were reefed. There was a great deal of trouble with the miserable gunboats, which had to be towed and threatened to founder at any moment. At length the storm blew

itself out, and once more, on August 3, Commodore Preble had his forces off Tripoli."

Mr. Shepard paused and Joe looked up at him, wondering why he had stopped.

"By the way, how is your leg coming on?" asked his grandfather, with a sudden change of subject.

"Leg?" murmured Joe, vaguely, "oh, that. I'd forgotten all about it. A broken leg doesn't amount to much when you're thinking of those chaps getting ready to fight."

Mr. Shepard chuckled.

"I suppose you've forgotten that it is customary to eat about this time of the day?"

"Well, now that you mention it, Grandfather, I could do with a snack of lunch. It takes a lot to get a fellow excited enough to forget that."

## CHAPTER XII

“BEFORE lunch, as you remember, we had assembled the American squadron off the town of Tripoli, and, the conditions of wind and weather being at last favorable, Commodore Preble decided that this was the day to start the big game of the season. The enemy had come to the same conclusion and seemingly were anxious to begin. They had sent out all their gunboats, which were divided into two squads about half a mile apart, one near the eastern entrance and the other guarding the western passage to the harbor. Supporting them were the galleys, and the guns of the shore batteries, all fully manned. Jussuf Caramalli was inviting attack. He had no doubt of the outcome, and expected that after the battle there would be an end to the blockade and a prospect of large ransom for the prisoners he was confident of securing. So much for the line-up of the corsairs.

“At about half past twelve, while the *Constitution* was some three miles off shore, she headed into the wind and signaled the other vessels to come within hail. They ran up one at a time and received their instructions. The offense was to attack both shipping and batteries. Various lieutenants were given command of our clumsy gunboats and were ordered to concentrate their efforts on the similar vessels of the enemy. The two bomb-boats in charge of Lieutenants Dent and Robinson were directed to shell the town; and the light cruisers, headed by the *Constitution*, were to stand by to cover the small boats or bombard the shore

batteries. In less than an hour they were ready, and "Old Ironsides," her flags flying and every man aboard her at his station, turned her figurehead toward Tripoli. She must have seemed a bit scornful as she sailed proudly into those hostile waters with the little squadron around her, as if indeed she reflected the spirit of the man who ruled her quarter-deck.

"In front were the gunboats, which formed the advance, and behind her the brigs and schooners, whose object was to protect the smaller craft. At half past two the flag-ship signaled to begin action. The referee's whistle had blown, the game was about to begin, while the spectators lined the walls of the town set above the harbor.

"Our two bomb-vessels opened the firing, and immediately the shore batteries replied with a deluge of cannon-balls, the guns flashing at every port. The shipping on both sides began their exchange at closer quarters, and soon the entire scene was ablaze amid the roar of almost continuous explosions.

"It is with the gunboats that we shall find the most excitement on this day. Our six aimed to engage the nine of the enemy stationed near the eastern passage. These were the least protected from the shore and, with a rush, we made for them, speeding under sail and oars. It was a sort of play around the end, with Decatur carrying the ball while the others formed an interference. Due to the fact that these awkward craft were almost impossible to steer, three of the six were practically kept out of the game; but the others had started and never stopped. The men were armed with muskets, cutlasses and pikes. The long guns in the bows were rammed full of grape-shot for close work. The anx-

iously awaited day had arrived, and every man was eager for the fray.

"The corsairs opened a brisk fire on our advancing boats, expecting a blast in return. It did not come. Again they fired. Again there was no response; only the Americans were getting nearer, and feverishly the Moslems reloaded. On went Decatur and the others, grimly indifferent to the singing bullets until they were actually within the smoke of the corsairs' cannonade.

"'Now give it to 'em, boys!' came the cry of command to the gunners, and for the first time we answered back.

"Up to that moment the *Siren*, *Nautilus*, *Argus* and the others had been firing upon the pirates and so helping to even the odds of one to three against our men. Now they were forced to cease for fear of hitting their comrades; so our three gunboats were left to their own resources in a struggle with nine of the enemy. And they responded gloriously! It was no affair of exchange of long shots. 'Board 'em!' cried the young commander, and, as we might term it, plunged into the line.

"With never an instant's hesitation they headed for the heavier and more numerously manned boats, discharging volleys of grape-shot at close range to herald their approach. Decatur laid his vessel alongside one of the enemy's and with a shout leaped aboard her, followed by his eager crew. The Tripolitans, surprised by such tactics, fled to the stern of their craft only to be pursued relentlessly. After a short struggle hand-to-hand, they surrendered; and Decatur, taking possession of the prize, looked about for another foe. He saw one not far off to leeward; and as before he bore down upon her and, following a blast of grape from the

bow gun, boarded her as he had the other, with the same relentless impetuosity. However in this instance he met with greater resistance and very nearly lost his life. Seeing the captain before him, Decatur sprang at him, thrusting with a pike. The Moslem, a powerful pirate, wrenched the weapon from the Lieutenant's hand and attacked him with it. With his sword Decatur tried to parry the thrust, only to break his blade at the hilt. The pike struck him in the chest and, finding himself weaponless, the young American pushed it aside and rushed upon his assailant, grappling the heavier man. After a moment of desperate wrestling, they fell together on the slippery deck, the corsair, on top, lifting a dagger to plunge it into his prostrate foe. Decatur, looking up, saw the descending blade and, grasping the other's wrist, gripped it while he turned on his side, seeking his pistol. Not for a moment did he lose his wits. Coolly he held his frantic enemy and at length, loosening his weapon, he shot the corsair dead as he lay upon his back. It was a close call, nor were these two the only ones concerned in the incident. Another pirate, rushing to help his captain, lifted a scimitar to strike a fatal blow at the prostrate Lieutenant. At that moment a member of Decatur's crew named Reuben James saw what was going on. So injured himself that he could not handle a cutlass, James interposed his body between the blade and his young commander's head, thus receiving the cut himself. Happily he was not killed, and some thirty years later, such are the delays of Congress, he received a pension for his brave act.

“Free of his burden, Decatur leaped to his feet ready to tackle the next man in his path. By that time, however, the Tripolitans had had quite enough of this sort of fighting

and, seeing that their captain had been slain, they decided that it was best to surrender. So Decatur took another boat. He and his thirty-five men had captured two vessels armed by some eighty corsairs, fifty-two of whom were either killed or wounded.

“So far we have talked of Decatur only, because we can’t watch every player at the same time. His performance, however, is an example of what all the others were doing. For instance there was Mr. Trippe, a midshipman in charge of boat No. 6. He, like Decatur, reserved his fire until he was upon his enemy and, after delivering it, immediately boarded her. So impetuous was his crew that, as their boat struck the other, it rebounded; and only Trippe and ten companions succeeded in reaching the corsair. Surely the great difference in numbers might have caused these few to hesitate and to defend themselves until the others had pulled back. Not at all. The eleven Americans attacked at once and, as in the Decatur incident, the two opposing leaders fell to in single combat. And the Turk was no mean foe. He was a sturdy, lively chap, perfectly willing to fight. In the midst of roaring cannon and clashing steel, these enemies parried and thrust at each other as if they were alone in the world. It was pike against sword. The corsair would advance, thrusting viciously, and in the exchange of blows each would receive a hurt. Leaping in and out, circling to gain an opening, tight-lipped and grim, the two gave and took cut after cut until the Midshipman had received eight upon the head and several in the chest. Still he fought on until, driven to his knees, he made a final, desperate upward thrust and killed the Moslem captain. And he, too, was saved by a watchful comrade. Sergeant Meridith of the

marines bayoneted a Turk who would have struck his commander from behind. Once more the fall of the captain was a signal for the corsairs to call it a day and Mr. Trippe and his ten men had captured one of Caramalli's strongest vessels. How many they fought against is not known. Many of the corsairs jumped into the sea, leaving behind only thirty-six, of whom twenty-one were either killed or wounded.

“This is the sort of fighting that was going on during the first quarter of this desperate game we were playing against the Tripolitan pirates. Meanwhile the brigs and schooners were on the alert to protect our six gunboats; and, when the corsairs attempted to aid their brothers, Hull, Stewart and the others drove them back. Nor was the *Constitution* idle. It was she who bore the brunt of the heavy work against the fortifications. Sailing in as close as she dared, she silenced battery after battery on the shore, driving the Tripolitans from their guns by the rapidity and accuracy of her fire. The Commodore reported that nine of his heavy cannon threw five hundred shot in about two hours. That is an indication of the training the men had received on the flagship. Her gunners must have worked like machines, for remember that after each discharge the cannon had to be sponged, charged with powder, which required to be rammed home, loaded with solid round shot, then primed and aimed before the match was laid to the train of powder in her breach. They didn't slip a fully equipped shell into their guns in those days; every operation was done by hand and the heavy cannon themselves swung in and out of the ports by rope tackles. Lively lads they were, under the eyes of the Commodore who saw everything that went on about

him besides keeping a sharp lookout upon what the distant vessels in his squadron were doing. His was not the easiest task, you may be sure; nor was he charmed against getting hit by the enemy's fire concentrated on our famous frigate.

"For about two hours the *Constitution* played an almost lone hand against the forts of the town. She moved from spot to spot, silencing the batteries that threatened the rest of the squadron. At four-thirty, because the wind had changed and was coming from a dangerous quarter, she signaled for the withdrawal of the gunboats and bombers. Then, while the prizes were gathered in and the cruisers took our clumsy craft in tow, she stood off a determined effort on the part of the enemy's galleys to rescue their lost vessels. When the rest of the squadron was well away, the *Constitution*, with a final broadside, turned her back upon Tripoli. We had scored decidedly in the opening scrimmage. Three of the enemy gunboats had been sunk, three more had been taken and a large number of corsairs had been killed. Of course we had our losses too, though by comparison they were insignificant. Altogether there were only fourteen men killed and wounded. We had lost no vessels and not one was seriously damaged. The *Constitution* had been in the most exposed position, under the guns of the forts. One man aboard her had been hit on the elbow and slightly hurt; a cannon on the quarter-deck was hit, and the upper rigging was somewhat cut. No great comfort in this for Jussuf Caramalli.

"One quite unhappy incident did occur. Decatur's young brother was killed. He was in charge of a gunboat and was about to board a Tripolitan when he was shot in the head, dying instantly. It was reported that the enemy had sur-

rendered and that the killing was an act of treachery. You may be sure it was amply revenged.

“I have emphasized the doings of a few men in this first battle with Caramalli’s corsairs; but not because they fought any harder than the others or were more successful. All the Americans were doing the work that came to their hands and we may say, as did Commodore Preble, that the personnel of the entire squadron performed their several duties with courage and ability of a high order. Their team work was fine, the men backed one another up like brothers, and those who bore the heaviest burden never failed to receive the support they rightfully expected.

“Thus ended the first attack upon the town of Tripoli, and Jussuf Caramalli, taking stock of his losses, grew thoughtful. Also you may be sure there was a busy clacking of tongues in the town that night. The men who had escaped from the gunboats wanted to know who had told them that the Americans were cowards and would not fight hand-to-hand. The gunners who had manned the batteries were ready to declare that only devils could shoot as straight as those on the *Constitution*. Why, and again why, had they been informed that under the Stars and Stripes were a people without courage, who would fling down their arms and beg for mercy at the sight of a brandished scimitar? They could not understand it, nevertheless they had learned a lesson. Thereafter they did not sail out of their protected harbor eagerly seeking hand-to-hand encounters with the boyish Americans, who seemed without fear and who fought gaily as if for very love of the game they played so well.

“One of the first effects of this battle was a rumor that Jussuf was disposed to treat for peace. This word was

brought by the captain of a French privateer who had come out of Tripoli with the news of the damage done to the town. This was, by the way, more than we had expected; and it was the French Consul to Tripoli (the wish being father to the thought), who was taking the lead in this talk of peace. Commodore Preble, fearing treachery of some sort, ignored these suggestions.

“Instead he was busy preparing for the next quarter of the game. All the rigging was repaired; ammunition was transferred from the *Intrepid*, which was sailing back and forth with supplies from Malta; and the captured gunboats were put in shape to fight their late owners. By the 7th of the month, three days after the first attack, we were ready once more; and, at nine o’clock in the morning, the gunboats and bombers proceeded to a position to the westward of the town where they were under fair protection from the rocks. At two o’clock all the vessels were at their stations and the guns opened fire.

“This was something of a long distance battle. There were no reckless Turks eager to come to grips with the Americans. They stayed within the harbor for the most part. One or two tentative attempts to come out, backed by their galleys, were made; but the *Constitution*, *Nautilus* and *Enterprise* were to windward, and they dared not venture far for fear of being cut off.

“A ceaseless cannonade was kept up for nearly three hours before the Commodore gave the order for his ships to withdraw, and in this sort of fighting we did not fare so well as upon the previous occasion. The wind being on-shore, the *Constitution* was kept away, and in consequence there was no great interference with the land batteries.

They did considerable damage to our gunboats, one of which was lost by a hot shot exploding her magazine. This was No. 8, the boat Mr. Trippe had taken. She blew up, killing ten and wounding eight of her men. Still she fought to the very end. The crew of her bow gun, although the after end of their vessel was under water, continued to load their cannon and succeeded in firing it as the forward part of the boat sank beneath them. They gave three cheers and took to the water. All were rescued, including Midshipman Spence of the *Siren*, who could not swim. Apparently this fact concerned him little. He clung to an oar until he was picked up and immediately went to work to fight again.

“This second attack caused Jussuf to think still more deeply. He could see no sense in continuing this war; and moreover his vessels and the walls of his town were suffering from the fierce bombardment, not to mention the people who were being killed by the unaccountable Americans. He had a preconceived notion that our presence in the Mediterranean was merely a show of force to induce him to lower the price of ransom. He could not believe that we had made up our minds not to pay at all. It seemed too foolish a procedure for us to spend enough to equip and maintain our squadron in those waters, when he would be satisfied with a yearly tribute which would certainly save us much money. He could not understand that we were willing to give gold and lives to maintain such things-of-naught as national honor, dignity and self-respect.

“With these thoughts in mind he did open negotiations with Commodore Preble for a cessation of hostilities. After much talk he reduced by about one half his demands for the ransom of the prisoners he held, proposing, with a mag-

nanimous gesture, to free the lot at five hundred dollars a head. As to future tribute—he was willing to waive that, at least until the ships were gone. He wanted to end this bombardment of his city; and, moreover, he had other troubles. His deposed brother, Hamet, was preparing to attack him by land; so all in all he would let his American slaves go at a paltry five hundred each, and cheap enough, he thought.

“Doubtless he was greatly surprised and incensed to find the Commodore extremely cool to this generous offer. He had reduced his price, and if the Americans were fools enough to spend twice as much or more in warring on him, they could go ahead.

“And so the Commodore went ahead with a vengeance. On the night of the 24th of August he sent in his bomb vessels, under protection of the gunboats, and for several hours they shelled the town without a return shot being fired at them. From this the Commodore concluded that the bombs we were hurling over the walls of Tripoli could be doing very little damage, a fact which was later confirmed by Captain Bainbridge.

“On the 28th, shortly after midnight, all the gunboats accompanied by the brigs and schooners anchored off the entrance of the harbor. From there they began a heavy bombardment. By dawn there was a general engagement in progress, the corsairs striving to drive the small boats away. The *Constitution* now entered the game. The Commodore ordered his light vessels to retire, and scattered the pursuing enemy with a few rounds of grape and solid shot, which sank one of them and forced two others ashore to avert the same fate. Then, scorning the increasing fire of

the heavy guns on the walls, the *Constitution* sailed into the harbor and came to within musket shot of the forts. For three quarters of an hour she poured broadside after broadside into the enemy fortifications, damaging them extensively and killing many men. And, although the old ship was the target for scores of heavy cannon, not a man was killed and the injury to her rigging was comparatively slight.

“Again we drew off to replenish the store of ammunition aboard the various vessels and to prepare for the next attack. You will observe that the Commodore was a determined person bent upon making Jussuf Caramalli suffer severely and often.

“On September 3d, we were ready for another go at the game, and this time the Tripolitans seemed at first somewhat more determined to oppose the Americans. They had observed that our assaults upon them were dependent upon an easterly wind, and they tried to take advantage of that fact. So, upon this afternoon, they had their gunboats ready in the most favorable position.

“Decatur and Somers, as they had been previously, were in command of our gun vessels; and, noting the awaiting corsairs, they concluded that here was another chance for a bit of vigorous hand-to-hand fighting, and went forth gaily to the encounter. They were disappointed. The enemy had had enough of that sort of conflict and, when they saw the Americans making for them, took to their heels, heading for the inner harbor as fast as sails and oars could carry them. Our men regretted this exceedingly, for they had counted upon adding a gunboat or two to our forces. They could not follow on account of the heavy guns on the fortifications.

"No such consideration as this, however, deterred the Commodore on the flag ship. He had noted that the bomb vessels were being subjected to a heavy fire from the shore and once again he sailed into the harbor to protect them. Alone the proud old ship stood steadily in toward the rocky coast, as if nothing in the world could halt her. As one battery after another aimed their cannon at her, she replied with a broadside, and where her shots struck the gun remained silent thereafter. On she went, daring the Tripolitans to do their worst, until it seemed her forefoot must strike the rocks. Then she halted and, turning her ports to bear upon the enemy, she opened such a tornado of solid shot upon them that the walls of the town seemed to reel under the impact. Round after round she poured into the fortifications, the gunners working like mad at their ramming and sponging, yet never in too great a hurry to aim well and truly. A group of shore batteries might fire upon her, only to receive in reply a blast so deadly that it did not speak again. Alone, with not one vessel in support, "Old Ironsides" stood a target for nearly twice the number of her own guns, and never flinched. One after another she silenced the cannon of Jussuf Caramalli and, when her ammunition began to run low, she drew off slowly, as if indifferent to the efforts of her foes. It was an amazing performance, only comparable to future exploits in her own remarkable career. Not a man was hurt. Her rigging, though cut, was not sufficiently injured to cause her to falter for an instant in her stately withdrawal. So ended the fifth attack.

## CHAPTER XIII

AFTER dinner Mr. Shepard and Joe went out on the porch. The light had gone swiftly. The stars were blotted out by low-lying clouds which hung in a lifeless air, and the quiet ocean was scarcely visible. The glow at the end of his grandfather's cigar waxed and waned almost rhythmically in the intense darkness as the younger man moved restlessly in his chair.

"My word, it's hot," he murmured half to himself. It was not a remark requiring comment. The fact was all too obvious.

Off at sea below the horizon the glow of an occasional flash of lightning showed red and threatening. The little seashore town was abnormally still, and few lights showed in cottage windows. Like Joe and his grandfather, their occupants were out in the open, trying to catch a breath of air while they waited for the coming storm to clear the murky atmosphere.

"I've been wondering," Joe said after a time, "what those fellows off Tripoli did with themselves when they weren't fighting. Of course during the day there was a lot of work, repairing damages and getting ready for the next attack. All the same, there must have been a few hours when they could loaf, don't you think?"

"Undoubtedly," agreed Mr. Shepard. "I've often speculated about that very thing and tried to imagine what it was like to be on one of the vessels tossing off that hostile coast. I don't believe those boys had such a bad time of it. Cer-

tainly they didn't think so; and I'm sure they laughed at the hardships and joked about them while they ate their rather sketchy meals."

"There would be lots to talk about after one of those battles," Joe put in musingly. "Each one must have been so busy with his own job that he couldn't see exactly what the other fellows were doing, and he'd want to know."

"Yes, indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Shepard. "There was no end to the recounting of experiences and it wasn't all confined to the quarter-deck by any means. The forecastle had its tales to tell. The sailors of the *Vixen* were boasting of what their Mr. Trippe had done when he exchanged blow for blow with that corsair captain. Sergeant Meridith would have described the scene to the other marines in glowing terms, telling how he had come upon the two, circling around each other and never giving him a chance to cut in and help his commander. 'And just then,' he'd say, 'up comes a black pirate behind the Lieutenant, brandishing his crooked sword. I fixed him so he'll do no more harm. All the same I was troubled for the lad, and him bleeding from all those wounds. I thought he was done for when he went to his knees, but no fear! He finished the job himself, sore hurt though he was.'

"That must be the sort of thing you would have heard in the forecastles. And when the sailors or gunners went ashore, as they did occasionally, they would meet men of the other cruisers. Then there must have been a bout of lively bragging over the bravery and skill of their own commanders to the detriment of all the other officers in the squadron.

"I don't want to give you the impression that there was no

discontent among the thousand and more men under Commodore Preble. It wasn't a comic opera outfit by any means. There were those who grumbled at the dog's life they were leading, complained at the severity of the discipline and perhaps muttered threats under their breaths. Moreover a certain proportion of them were foreigners, picked up where they could be found, who could not have been expected to develop any great loyalty to a flag wholly strange to them. Nevertheless, by and large, their spirit must have been excellent or they could not have fought with the determination they displayed. They were rough men, needing a strong and rigid control to keep them in order; but they respected an authority based upon courage that never shrank from danger and was eager to lead them into the thickest of the fray. To that they gave unquestioning devotion and, when needful, their lives.

"I fancy we have a tendency to think of those men whose names have come down to us through the years as different from the ordinary run of individuals, as if they were cast in a mould especially reserved for heroes and all exhibited the same characteristics, the same temperaments, the same faculty for effecting spectacular achievements. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

"Take Richard Somers and Stephen Decatur for example, the two who were in command of the gunboats. They were extremely good friends and grew up together in the service, having started as messmates aboard the frigate *United States* on her initial trip to sea. Somers was a cool, unhurried sort of fellow, not unduly talkative, though in every way a warm-hearted, likeable chap. Decatur on the other hand was impulsive, reckless and voluble. They were as dissimilar

as any two young men could well be, and yet each is remembered for much the same sort of unruffled courage.

“I like to picture them off Tripoli in those days. They were very intimate, and we can imagine, on an evening after one of the attacks on the town, Decatur having himself rowed from the *Enterprise* to visit Somers, if the *Nau-tilus* were near enough at hand. In the cabin of the schooner they would sit and discuss what had happened or was likely to happen, Decatur doing most of the talking while Somers listened, dropping in a word now and then to balance the extravagance of his friend’s wild proposals.

“‘If I were running this instead of the old man—’ Decatur is likely to have begun more than once.

“‘Aye, you’d have had us all piled up on the rocks long ago,’ Somers would cut in with a light laugh; to which, probably, the reckless Decatur would agree good-naturedly.

“Of course they discussed the Commodore and wondered why he didn’t do this or that. They were young enough to be confident of their own abilities to accomplish anything, and only asked an opportunity to risk their lives in the most unpromising adventures. They were impatient, too, and entirely sure that if they had been in command Jussuf Carammali and his gang of cutthroats would have succumbed long since. And yet, beneath the froth of their enthusiasms, they were quite aware of the responsibilities their Commodore carried. They knew that in his case they would be governed by considerations with which, as units in the squadron, they need not concern themselves. In spite of their lightly-made comments upon the way ‘the old man’ did things, they had an enormous admiration for him, and hoped, I’m sure, that

when the time came for them to assume such a command, they would succeed one-half so well.

"I do not believe that there could have been much of this youthful criticism in regard to the dangerous tasks he asked his good boys to undertake, and during these early days in 1804 the Commodore was contemplating another adventure. Let us suppose that Somers and Decatur were sitting in the cabin of the *Nautilus* when the officer on watch sent down word that the flag-ship was signaling for them to go aboard the *Constitution* without delay.

"'What's the old man up to now?' Decatur would be apt to cry, as he jumped to his feet, excited at the prospect of action.

"'We'll be told all in good time,' Somers would reply calmly, and the two would make haste to answer the summons, little guessing what was in store for one of them.

"We do not know the exact day Commodore Preble first spoke of his plan. We will suppose it was on this night that the two lieutenants were rowed from the *Nautilus* and, reaching the *Constitution*, reported themselves in her cabin. Stewart must have been there, with Dent and Isaac Hull. When they were all assembled, the Commodore revealed the scheme he had been turning over in his mind for several days.

"'Gentlemen,' he doubtless began, 'as you know, we are nearing the end of the season when the weather permits us to carry on our attacks upon Tripoli. Moreover we are growing short of ammunition. Caramalli's shipping will not come out to fight. So long as his vessels are intact their presence constitutes a menace to our blockade, and it is my desire

to destroy as many of them as possible before we withdraw for the winter.'

"He told them that he proposed to create a fire-ship and send it into the harbor to be exploded among the Tripolitan vessels huddled close under the guns of their forts. For many reasons it was a desperate undertaking, which perhaps explains why it met with such hearty approval from the young men.

"'What ship can we use, sir?' one may have asked.

"'The *Intrepid*,' replied the Commodore.

"'Oh,' Decatur mourned, 'I'm fond of that little ketch, sir.' It was in that vessel, you remember, he had sailed to set fire to the *Philadelphia*.

"Probably he didn't voice this sentiment at all, though he must have had a kindly feeling for the *Intrepid*. However, she was the craft in the squadron that could best be spared for such an enterprise; there could hardly have been any discussion on that point. Who should command her upon this last voyage was another matter. We can take for granted that every man in that cabin volunteered for the duty. Commodore Preble chose Richard Somers.

"It was a wise choice. This was not an expedition requiring the dash and enthusiasm of Decatur. There would be no hand-to-hand fighting. The *Intrepid* must go quietly about her deadly business with only a few men aboard to guide her. A cool and calm officer was needed who, in any circumstances, would keep his wits about him; and Somers had proved on more than one occasion that he possessed these qualities in abundance.

"Besides the lieutenant in command, four men were to be taken from the *Nautilus* and six others, under Lieutenant

Henry Wadsworth and Midshipman Joseph Israel, from the *Constitution*. These composed the entire company, and work was immediately started to put the ketch in condition for her last voyage.

“The *Intrepid*, you understand, was converted into a huge bomb; an ‘Infernals,’ they called it rather quaintly in those days. Lieutenant Somers built a room under the forward deck and into this was dumped one hundred barrels of powder. Well aft, they constructed another compartment to be filled with slivers of wood and other quick burning materials. Between these two enclosures they set up a sort of boxed-in channel filled with a train of powder. Forward, on the deck, they placed a hundred and fifty bombs, a large quantity of shot, fragments of iron and whatever else they could find which might deal destruction when the magazine exploded.

“The Commodore himself supervised these details for, although no one said it in so many words, everyone in the squadron was perfectly aware that the adventure was extra-hazardous under the most favorable circumstances. So far as he was able, Commodore Preble strove to safeguard his men, leaving nothing to chance that could be anticipated. At best it was a perilous matter to sail a vessel so laden into the harbor of an enemy. To test the courage of those who walked her deck, there was the constant menace of a premature explosion; and to lay her under the guns of Tripoli was a breath-taking task which only those ready to offer a supreme sacrifice would willingly undertake.

“They planned to make the attempt upon a dark night, and hoped that in the gloom those who saw the little ketch slowly moving through the waters of the harbor would think

her an innocent merchantman which had eluded the blockade. That very thing had happened when the *Philadelphia* was burned, and they told each other that it would happen again; that the *Intrepid* was a lucky craft for those who sailed her. They prophesied cheerfully that the corsairs would not heed the vessel, that she would creep into the sheltered harbor and anchor there among the crowded craft without arousing suspicion. Then would come the moment of greatest excitement. The men who were to row were to slip into the boats alongside, oars out, ready to get away without the loss of a second. The others, at a whispered word, would go to the after compartment and set fire to the shavings. An instant more they must wait, until the kindling was so well started that it could not be stamped out, then swiftly make for the boats and row madly to get beyond range of that enormous bomb. So it would go, if all went well; and none spoke of possible disaster. In their hearts, perhaps, there was less feeling of confidence.

“They were forced to await a dark night with a favoring wind. It came the day after the last attack; on September 4th, to be exact. There was no moon, and a light breeze drew in from the east. It is probable that Lieutenant Somers had a final interview with the Commodore in the cabin of the *Constitution*. All the information that could be of any possible service the latter imparted to the younger man; matters having to do with the position of the enemy craft, which the Commodore had had the opportunity to observe when he was close inshore bombarding the forts.

“And one other thing, Mr. Somers,’ Commodore Preble remarked, ‘the enemy is short of ammunition. It

would be unfortunate if this powder on the ketch fell into his hands.'

" 'I can assure you that it will not fall into his hands, sir,' Somers replied.

" 'Of course,' said the Commodore, 'you can sink the ketch if you should be in danger of being boarded.'

" 'Aye, sir, or blow her up,' replied the Lieutenant. They eyed each other for a moment, not speaking; then, with a curt nod, Commodore Preble ended the interview:

" 'Good luck, Mr. Somers. Report immediately upon your return.'

"With a salute Richard Somers quitted the cabin.

"At eight o'clock all was ready. The *Intrepid* was manned and waiting for her commander to come aboard. Decatur had a last word with his friend.

" 'And mind,' he warned at the end of their short talk, 'keep an eye out for gunboats among the rocks.'

" 'Oh, no fear of them,' laughed Somers. 'They'll cut and run if they think we're Americans.'

"Aye, likely enough. Well, good luck, Dick. We'll open a bottle when you get back.' They gripped hands and parted.

"The *Argus*, *Vixen* and *Nautilus* accompanied the *Intrepid* part of the way. At the express command of the Commodore, the *Siren* stood in toward the western passage ready to bring prompt word to the flag-ship. Lieutenant Somers' own vessel, the *Nautilus*, stood by until it was feared she might be seen from the shore. Then, disappearing into the gloom of the night, the *Intrepid* went on alone."

Mr. Shepard paused and Joe became aware of his surroundings. The dull muttering of the coming storm could

be heard now and then as it slowly drew nearer. The lightning flashes were more frequent, and the low-lying clouds began to stir sluggishly. The ocean, as if awakening from the depression of a hot and humid day, grew restless, and the low-toned murmur of an increasing surf became audible. The sodden air, heavy with accumulated moisture, was still motionless as if the world held its breath on the eve of a catastrophe.

After a moment Mr. Shepard went on with the tale and Joe noted a warmer and gentler note in his voice.

"The men on the *Nautilus* were the last who saw the *Intrepid*, as her sails so blended with the night that she seemed to fade out of sight like the slowly vanishing ghost of a vessel. Aboard the flag-ship, Commodore Preble paced the deck restlessly, his eyes turning southward, waiting for the first flash of flame to send him a message of how the adventure fared. Of all who watched that night, none was more anxious than he. It was by his orders that this dangerous mission had been undertaken. As he strode up and down the quarter-deck of the *Constitution*, he must have speculated once again on the wisdom of his decision. Were the advantages to be gained worth the enormous risks he had asked his men to take? Did the chance of destroying the Tripolitan shipping balance a possible loss of so fine and promising an officer as Lieutenant Somers? You may be certain he believed they did, and no one else was in a position to judge the problem so accurately. During that period of waiting there was little talk aboard the *Constitution*. Any necessary orders were given in short quick commands. It was no time to annoy the Commodore. He walked alone. There was no one with whom he could share the re-

sponsibility, nor did he ask to share it, he faced his task with fortitude; yet it is possible that, in the loneliness of his position, he envied the young man he had sent upon the perilous journey.

“Not far from the *Constitution* lay the *Enterprise* with Decatur in command. He, too, paced the deck of his schooner awaiting the gleam against the sky which would accompany the blowing up of the *Intrepid*. There was no need now to conceal his feelings, no necessity to hide anxiety by a cheery, laughing optimism. He was worried about his friend Somers, and wished a hundred times that he was aboard the ketch to share whatever fate was in store for this old messmate of his.

“Farther northward were the other cruisers, and on them also men watched and waited. The time was gone for happy prophecy. The stark hazards of the venture were too evident to be ignored during this period of suspense. All eyes were turned toward the land, while the minutes ticked slowly away and the little squadron kept its silent vigil.

“Farthest inshore lay the *Nautilus*, and aboard her every man and boy lined the rail. Somers was their commander; four of her men accompanied him, and officers and sailors alike must have felt a very personal interest in what was going on. They peered intently into the darkness and presently, far off, a flash showed high on the walls of the town, followed by the boom of a cannon shot. Another spoke and yet another, and the men on the *Nautilus* muttered unanswerable questions. Then, low down on the water, they saw a small light moving swiftly, as if carried by someone on the deck of a vessel.

“‘Did you see that?’ asked a sailor of his mate standing

beside him. Before a reply could be given there came a mighty detonation that rocked the ships outside the harbor from trucks to keels. The heavens were lighted by a brilliant glare and the flaming figure of the little ketch stood out boldly against the black waters of the harbor. For a short moment she was visible, etched in the fire that outlined her rigging. An instant later, the *Intrepid* disappeared forever.

“The echoing roar of that explosion passed into a profound silence. The guns on the walls of Tripoli were stilled, the men who had manned them awed into immobility by that terrific blast.

“There was silence, too, on the ships of the American squadron. What could have happened? That was the question in every mind from the Commodore down to the smallest powder boy. No man could give an answer. Only one dismaying fact was evident. The explosion, for some unknown reason, must have been premature. There had not been time for the ketch to reach the inner harbor.

“Then began weary hours of waiting, hoping against hope for the return of the small boats. I do not believe that anyone really expected them; nevertheless, until daybreak, they tried to bolster up their waning confidence with sanguine theories in explanation of what had occurred. Decatur, straining his eyes to pierce the darkness, listened intently for the sound of oars, reiterating his conviction that his friend Somers would come back. He would have turned fiercely upon any man who had expressed a doubt of it. They acted, all of them, as if at any moment their comrades would return. Lights were lowered to the water’s edge to guide those who could no longer see. From the *Constitution* the boom of a cannon signaled the anxiety of the Commodore;

but it was never heard by those to whom it was meant to speak. All night they waited, growing more and more apprehensive until at last the dawn broke. There was no sign of the *Intrepid* or of the two boats which had been with her. No longer could the truth be ignored. Lieutenant Somers and his men would never come back.

“Exactly what had gone wrong has remained a mystery. There was no survivor of that brave little band who disappeared into the darkness on the tragic night of September 4th, 1804. Many theories have been offered to explain the circumstances; but they are only guesses. Commodore Preble believed firmly that Somers had been boarded by corsairs lurking among the outlying rocks, and that he had deliberately blown up the ketch rather than have the powder fall into the hands of the enemy. The light seen passing swiftly along her deck seems to bear out this contention. One thing is certain, Lieutenant Somers would not have hesitated an instant had the circumstances been such as to make the sacrifice necessary. Another suggestion is that a hot shot from the shore was responsible. For us it can make little difference what occasioned the catastrophe. All that is needful is that we appreciate the fortitude of those men who, knowingly, took so enormous a risk in the performance of their duty. It is something of a satisfaction that their sacrifice is not forgotten. A monument to their memory stands today in Annapolis. As a part of our story we can remember that Lieutenant Wadsworth and Midshipman Israel, with six of the enlisted men, had volunteered from the *Constitution*. They, with Lieutenant Somers and four men from the crew of the *Nautilus*, comprised that gallant band of heroes.”

Mr. Shepard ceased to speak. As if to emphasize his last words, a flash of lightning lit up the heavens; a sharp crash of thunder echoed along the dunes, and the first wind of the coming storm stirred uneasily. A moment or two later when a few heavy drops of rain spattered upon the porch, Joe and his grandfather went inside.

## CHAPTER XIV

“THE blowing up of the *Intrepid* signaled the end of active operations against Tripoli. Never thereafter did an American ship fire upon the walls of the town. The blockade was continued and a considerable time elapsed before a treaty of peace was signed. Commodore Preble had returned home before these negotiations were completed; none the less it was the work of the squadron under his command which brought Jussuf Caramalli to a reasonable frame of mind.

“At this point we must go back a bit to see what was going on in the United States with reference to these operations in the Mediterranean. When the news of the loss of the frigate *Philadelphia* was received, the Government realized that it was necessary to replace her as speedily as possible. President Jefferson and his Cabinet, discussing the situation, decided that having been forced into this campaign they would keep it up until there was an end to the piracy which had been carried on by the Barbary corsairs for three hundred years. They determined to strengthen the squadron by the addition of the *President*, a 44-gun frigate, the *Congress* and *Constellation*, 38s, and the *Essex* a 32. These were ordered into service immediately.

“This was happening early in 1804 and, as you will expect, these additional ships were not ready. We didn’t believe in being prepared for anything and, as the Navy had no dry dock, it took a long time to put these vessels into service. Commodore Preble had not so much as begun his

active operations against the enemy, yet already the Government was preparing to send an officer to supersede him.

“This move to replace the Commodore was not the fault of anyone in particular; nor was it intended as a criticism of the man on the job. It so happened that the only two captains available were senior to Preble, and the change in command was necessitated by this condition. It was a somewhat awkward situation, which grew more embarrassing as the fine work of the squadron in the Mediterranean developed. Everyone would have liked to leave the command as it was; but that was impossible, and on the tenth of September, six days after the blowing up of the *Intrepid*, the President arrived off Tripoli and the broad pennant of Commodore Preble was lowered on the *Constitution*. In due time he sailed for America on the *John Adams*, reaching there at the end of February, 1805.

“Before he left, his ‘good boys’ assembled to say good-by to him. They were genuinely sorry to see him go, and wrote him a letter expressing their regret, which they all signed. This demonstration was undoubtedly a keen satisfaction to the Commodore. He had made his young officers work like slaves; he had insisted upon a rigid etiquette and the strictest discipline; nor had he been at pains to respect their sensibilities by a considered speech when he addressed them. His orders were snapped out with small regard for the feelings of those who received them. Nevertheless, under this surface irritability, they knew that he had their welfare at heart, that he played no favorites and that he was just. He asked no man to do anything he would not do himself, had circumstances permitted, and he worked as

hard as or harder than any of them. Above all, he honored the service in which he found himself, and his first thought was for the good name of the United States Navy. Such were the qualities which had won for him the admiration of these young fellows whose careers were beginning. They played the game as he taught it, recognizing the fundamental principles he had formulated, and throughout the days of their service carried on the traditions he had inaugurated to the great glory of the flag they had learned to love.

“It is pleasant to remember that no pains were spared to show the returning Commodore that the country appreciated his accomplishments. Congress presented him with a special gold medal and voted him the nation’s thanks. They paid him a still higher compliment by accepting his recommendation to build a fleet of gunboats, and in numerous ways following his advice as to the conduct of the Mediterranean campaign.

“A few years later he died of those bodily ills from which he had suffered for so long a time.

“If his little squadron was the nursery, the *Constitution*, in whose cabin Commodore Preble had taught his lessons, might well be called the cradle of the American Navy, as it rocked on the waters of the Mediterranean. Those young men learned in her that sacrifice was their portion and passed on that doctrine to succeeding generations. I do not remember one of our naval officers shouting that ‘America expects every man to do his duty!’ There has never been a need to shout it. The Navy takes that for granted and it is not a subject for slogans or a topic for conversation. We

civilians like to pin medals upon our heroes, but I am inclined to think that they mean little to the majority of the officers who receive them. It is the deed that counts.

“Well, it is for this that we remember Edward Preble. He was more than an energetic and capable officer. He was the founder of those measures which have to do with the development of what, for lack of a better term, we call morale. He suggested the undefined rules by which the navy judges the quality of a man. He aimed to inspire an unquestioning loyalty to the service, to the end that the individual would live for it, fight for it and die for it. His is one of the greatest names associated with the story of ‘Old Ironsides.’

“Going back to the Mediterranean we find that the *President* was now the flag-ship, flying the broad pennant of Commodore Samuel Barron. Decatur had been made a captain because of his exploit in burning the *Philadelphia* and was put in command of the *Constitution*. He retained her until a senior officer, Captain Rogers, arrived in the *Congress*, when the two exchanged ships. The *Constellation* and *Essex* completed the squadron, which was much stronger than it had ever been before, and the following spring was augmented by ten gunboats and several sloops and brigs.

“As I said, the real work had been done, although no one quite realized it. Commodore Barron continued the policy of blockading Tripoli until the weather would permit him to attack. During this time the *Constitution* went on to Lisbon for repairs, particularly of an injury to her bowsprit. The image of Hercules, which she had carried as a figurehead, had been shot away and was now replaced by a plain piece of carved wood called ‘a billet head.’ Mean-

while Commodore Barron had fallen ill, and in May he gave up his command to Captain Rogers. Once more the *Constitution* became the flag-ship of the squadron.

“While these things were going on, our old friend Jussuf was having his troubles. His brother Hamet was threatening to turn him out of Tripoli and, because of the rigid blockade, his people were growing hungry. The American forces had been increased instead of diminished, as he had expected; and, having a lively recollection of what the *Constitution* had done all by herself, he decided that the time had come to make peace with at least one of his enemies. The Spanish Consul at Tripoli opened the negotiations with Caramalli, and after considerable bluffing a treaty was drawn up and signed in the cabin of ‘Old Ironsides.’

“Much to their joy, Captain Bainbridge and the officers and men of the *Philadelphia* were released from their long imprisonment and ultimately returned to America.

“On the third of June, 1805, the *Constitution* fired off her guns in the direction of the town; but this time it was to exchange salutes of friendship with the forts in honor of the conclusion of peace.

“So ended a war, quite insignificant on its own account, which had a profound influence upon the development of our navy. It is highly probable that if it had not occurred the service would have been completely neglected, and we should have been forced into a much more serious conflict that was soon to come without the extremely valuable training of officers which had been begun at that time. I’m not at all sure that we shouldn’t erect a statue in memory of Jussuf Caramalli. He really did us a good turn.

“The settlement with Tripoli did not end all our Medi-

terranean difficulties. You remember the Dey of Tunis, an impatient chap who wanted this and that in a hurry? He was still much annoyed at us because we had picked up two of his vessels which were trying to run the blockade, and he wanted them back, and no time lost about it! He had sent a letter to Commodore Rogers in which he used very extravagant language, threatening all sorts of things if we didn't do as we were told. The Commodore, by way of answer, sailed with nearly his entire squadron and, on August 1st, anchored off Tunis, with his guns pointing toward the town. The Dey looked at them and came to the conclusion that there was some mistake. He had evidently been misinformed about these timid Americans; and not long afterward a perfectly satisfactory treaty was negotiated without the firing of a shot.

"This incident ended our troubles, and those of the rest of the world, with the pirates of the Barbary Coast. These corsairs, who had been preying on the shipping of the European nations for three centuries, were finally put upon their good behavior by a newly-created republic of which they had heard little and knew less. It has been said that the Pope publicly declared that, so far as the corsairs were concerned, America had done more for Christendom than all the European nations put together; which was undoubtedly true, whether he said it or not.

"Of course we could not have absolute faith that the Moslem gentlemen, who had signed various documents, would live up to their terms. They had treated similar engagements as scraps of paper and, although the squadron was gradually reduced, we left a few ships on that station for a number of years. Commodore Rogers went home in

1806, leaving Captain Campbell, who had come out in the *Constellation*, in command of the *Constitution*. She remained still another year, dropping into Tangier, Algiers, Tripoli and Tunis, just to let the rulers of those countries know that we were friendly and hoped they would continue to be.

“Meanwhile the enlistment time of the *Constitution*’s crew had run out. This caused more or less discontent among the sailors, which resulted in a sort of mutiny. The reason why she was not relieved will take us back to America and to a consideration of those outrages committed by British naval officers which culminated in the war of 1812.

“During this time, while we have been discussing our own affairs in the Mediterranean, Napoleon Bonaparte had been making himself decidedly conspicuous in Europe. When we last talked about him he had just had himself made First Consul, and the French people submitted tamely to his absolute dictation, in spite of the rivers of blood they had shed to create a republic. Napoleon, after a few years of this, decided that the title wasn’t good enough; so, along about the first of December, 1804, he declared himself Emperor of France, crowned himself during a gorgeous ceremony in the famous cathedral of *Notre Dame* in Paris, and called it a day. Then he went on the rampage throughout Europe. A year later he conquered the combined forces of Austria and Russia at the battle of Austerlitz. In 1806 he subdued Prussia, and by 1810 his Empire extended from Denmark to Naples.

“England was the only country that interfered in any way with Napoleon’s ambitions, and she wasn’t boasting about it. As a matter of fact, the people of that country

were rather more afraid of the 'little Corsican' than they cared to admit. He was threatening to invade the British Isles, and he had been so successful in making his threats good in the past that they were decidedly nervous. To be sure they had beaten the combined French and Spanish fleets off Cape Trafalgar when Lord Nelson, from his flag-ship, the *Victory*, had signaled to his forces the information that 'England expects every man to do his duty.' They were quite cheerful about that and boasted about 'the wooden walls of Old England.' All the same, they were by no means sure that the conqueror of Europe would not turn up one day leading an army across their sacred soil; and the nursemaids trained their charges by telling them that 'Boney' would catch them if they didn't watch out.

"As a result of the destruction of the French fleet by Lord Nelson, the French merchantmen dared not leave their ports. This put a great deal of business in the way of American shipping, and our ocean trade developed by leaps and bounds, much to the annoyance of the British merchant marine, who wanted it all, and could no longer count upon the Barbary pirates to seize our ships and cripple our growing industry, as they were at pains to point out to their government.

"Another condition arising from the Battle of Trafalgar was the almost complete end to the rich prizes the British naval forces and privateers were accustomed to pick up in various parts of the ocean. These gentlemen missed the gold they had collected for seizing French traders, and they didn't like it. They also complained to the British Government, and added to their tale by insisting that, although we

pretended to be neutral, we were in reality helping France by sending our ships into her ports.

“It is perfectly natural that when two nations are at war with each other they should have little time or inclination to bother about the rights of neutrals, especially neutrals disinclined to fight. Belligerent countries try to do all the injury they can to each other, so when England swept the French from the seas she wished to starve her and cut her off from any market for her manufactured goods. She meant to cripple her enemy financially, if it were possible. To this end she declared a blockade of all French ports from the Elbe to Brest, a line which you will discover, if you look at a map, reaches along the entire northern coast of France, all of the Belgian shore and a bit of Germany. This happened in 1806.

“Napoleon, not to be outdone in this blockading business, declared all the British Isles closed to trade; to which England promptly replied with an embargo on all French ports, no matter where located.

“To add to the friction caused by these restrictions, England revived a law she had made without consent of any other nation, by which she claimed the right to seize and search any neutral ship met upon the seas. If in so doing they should find any commodity which they considered contraband, (and they always did), they seized said ship and sent her into a British port to be judged by an English court created for the purpose. This was done to satisfy their merchants who were anxious to handicap us, and it worked very well indeed. A British cruiser would pick up an American vessel and take her in to be judged. And there the Ameri-

can vessel would sit until her cargo was ruined and her hull rotted. A still graver cause for contention was the British law of impressment, by which, in time of war, the Government seized all the English sailors she could find and forced them to serve in her navy. Even under this law she had considerable difficulty in getting enough men to man her many cruisers; and this was in no way remarkable because the merchant service offered an easier life with better pay.

“Naturally sailors who had been seized, regardless of who suffered, did not look on their navy with an overwhelming and patriotic love. In point of fact they deserted whenever the opportunity offered and, knowing no other trade, they sometimes found their way into American merchantmen. So England claimed another right: that of stopping all ships to search for deserters. Possibly if they had been at pains to make sure they were taking only deserting Englishmen we should not have complained. Instead they seized any man who suited their purpose, declaring that it was up to him to prove his nationality; and a great many so pressed were American citizens. Against illegal seizures of this sort we had been protesting for some twenty years—to no purpose. We argued with the British Government, while the officers of His Majesty’s Navy did what they pleased in a most arrogant and offensive manner. They interpreted this purely domestic law of impressment in the way that best suited them at the moment, a way which was neither considerate nor honest. They seized our men as they seized our ships, without regard to anything save their own convenience. They fired upon our vessels when their orders to stop were not instantly obeyed, and killed numerous innocent sailors who were entirely within their rights, just

because they ruled the ocean and insisted that the rest of the world should do as they commanded.

“Nor did they confine their attentions to merchant shipping. By no means! As far back as 1798 the British had treated our navy with the most insulting contempt. The United States sloop-of-war *Baltimore*, on duty convoying a fleet of trading vessels from Charleston to Havana, was stopped by a British squadron consisting of three ships-of-the-line and two frigates. They took three of the merchantmen, boarded the *Baltimore* and, after the most humiliating treatment of her officers, removed five of her sailors. And, remember, we were at peace with England! She was a friendly nation and we were assisting her to defeat France.

“I suppose our Government made some sort of half-hearted protest. It amounted to nothing. Our only action at that moment was to dismiss the captain of the *Baltimore* from the service for following explicit instructions which forbade him to resist any but a French ship. There must always be someone for the politicians to blame, and a naval officer is an easy mark.

“You would have thought that such insulting treatment accorded a vessel belonging to the public service would have stirred our Government to a just resentment. Apparently it did nothing of the sort. The pacific gentlemen who ran the country had their own interests to consider. The British naval officers continued to take our seamen on the high seas, and, if the ships from which they came were left short of men to work their craft, so much the worse for them. Thousands of Americans who had never seen England were impressed into the British service; and year after year we permitted it, making one excuse after another for inaction.

“At length, coming down to 1807, and having gained a notion of what had been going on in the rest of the world, we can now discuss why it was that the *Constitution* waited in vain for her relief.

“The Secretary of the Navy had planned to send the *Chesapeake*, a 38-gun frigate, on this mission. She was ordered into commission early in 1807, under command of Captain Charles Gordon. James Barron was to sail in her as Commodore of the Mediterranean Squadron, and she was fitted out at the Washington Navy Yard. Whoever did the work, they evidently took their own time about it; for she was there until June, and even then, as you will see, she wasn’t ready.

“Meanwhile the British Minister at Washington reported to our Government that three seamen from one of His Majesty’s ships had deserted and joined the crew of the *Chesapeake*. He requested that they be returned. This was all perfectly regular and, although we were under no obligation to grant this appeal, we wanted to be friendly, and agreed to look into the matter. Commodore Barron was instructed to make an investigation. He ordered Captain Gordon to find out the details and report; and that officer, after a painstaking examination of the case, learned that without doubt three sailors had deserted from the British ship *Melampus*. The men themselves made no bones about admitting it, claiming that they were American citizens who had been unlawfully impressed by the English. This gave the incident a very different aspect. It was one thing to grant a favor to a friendly nation by giving up seamen of theirs who had run away. But it was exceedingly impudent to demand that we should return men of our own country, who had been taken

out of American merchantmen by unscrupulous officers of His Majesty's Navy. Captain Gordon took considerable trouble to verify the statements of the men. There was not the slightest doubt that two of them were telling the exact truth. The case of the third was not so complete, yet even he exhibited sufficient evidence to convince Captain Gordon that it would be an injustice to hand him over to the English. Also the presumptive evidence was all in favor of the three deserters, in view of the fact that it was a common practice of the British to take our seamen wherever they found them. It was the duty of our Government to maintain the rights of one who claimed to be an American citizen, when no proof was forthcoming to the contrary. The bare word of an English captain was not enough in the circumstances.

"All this was explained carefully to the British Minister, who seemed perfectly satisfied. He undoubtedly made a report to the Vice Admiral of the British squadron stationed at Halifax, and there the case rested for the time being. It is probable that Commodore Barron and Captain Gordon forgot all about it in the stress of their other duties.

"In the early days of June, the *Chesapeake* dropped down from Washington to Norfolk. Here she took on her guns, stores and most of her crew. On the 22nd, she sailed from Hampton Roads bound for the Mediterranean. With such a long journey before him the Commodore considered that he would have ample time on the way to put his ship in shape and train his crew. They were late in starting and anxious to relieve the *Constitution*. There seemed no need to delay in order to put the frigate on a war footing before leaving port, because we were at peace with all the world.

Nor was the *Chesapeake* a merchantman, offering an excuse to an English captain to stop and search her for contraband. On the contrary she was a vessel belonging to the United States Navy, bound on an errand in which no other nation had the slightest excuse to interfere.

“So she sailed in a very unprepared state. Her decks were littered with extra spars, quantities of uncoiled cordage, furniture of various sorts, and all kinds of odds and ends put aboard at the last moment. Her officers were strangers to the crew and to each other. They had been called to quarters only three times, and few men aboard had a clear notion of what was expected of them or where to go in case of trouble. The ship was just a crowd of individuals thrown together for the first time, with no more idea of what to do than a football squad out for its initial practice.

“There was a French privateer lying at Annapolis, taking advantage of our neutrality. The British knew she was there and kept a cruiser or two in the vicinity waiting for her to come out. The English vessels were in the habit of anchoring in Lynnhaven Bay and making themselves quite at home, which was all right, as our harbors were open to ships of any nation. It occasioned no surprise, therefore, to those on the *Chesapeake* to see the English frigate *Leopard*, 56 guns, weigh anchor and disappear. They were all busy as bees trying to put their own craft in order.

“With a light head wind our cruiser rounded Cape Henry. The *Leopard* was ahead on the same tack and no one paid any attention to her until, about three o’clock in the afternoon, she changed her course. Coming up on the weather quarter of the *Chesapeake*, she hailed, and her deck officer announced that he had a message for Commodore



AN OFFICER FROM THE *LEOPARD* CAME ABOARD



Barron. Courtesies of this sort were not uncommon between the two navies, and Captain Gordon brought his frigate into the wind and answered that he would be glad to receive a boat from the *Leopard*.

“As the two vessels lay within a short distance of each other a number of the officers on the *Chesapeake* were puzzled by the aspect of the British ship. Her ports were open, and the tompions in the muzzles of her guns were out. Her crew had been called to quarters; there was an air of threatening alertness aboard the *Leopard* that set our men wondering; and they wished that their own vessel was as ready for action as the other appeared to be. It looked a bit suspicious, I suppose; yet no one on the *Chesapeake* had reason to believe that these hostile signs had anything to do with them.

“An officer from the *Leopard* came aboard and was conducted to Commodore Barron in his cabin. Here the despatch spoken of was produced. Our Commodore expected it to be a letter from either his government or a friend. It was neither. Instead he read an order from Vice Admiral Berkley of the British squadron to the commanders of the various ships under him, instructing them to stop the United States frigate *Chesapeake* when she should have left her home waters and to search her for deserters. They were, you see, still looking for those three men from the *Melampus*. These British naval officers were not satisfied with the report of their own Minister. They didn’t care whether the men they asked for were Americans or not. They meant to have them back. Britannia ruled the waves and did not propose to be hampered by law, courtesy or justice. This was the plain intent of the message from the British Vice Admiral and it

was equally plain that Captain Humphreys of the *Leopard* meant to carry out his instructions to the letter. The preliminaries were conducted with a show of politeness, and the hope was expressed that Commodore Barron would reply promptly and complaisantly to this most insulting proposal.

"The Commodore told the British lieutenant that what his captain asked was impossible. His recruiting officers had been instructed by the American Government to make certain that no deserters were included in the crew of the *Chesapeake* and, further, that if there was to be any searching done it was highly improper to have it conducted by a British officer. Commodore Barron could hardly report to his Secretary that he had permitted a foreigner to come aboard his ship and give orders to have the crew searched. That a Commodore of the United States Navy should submit to such a proposal was too fantastic an idea to be taken seriously.

"It was in fact so extraordinary a proposition that a story grew up to account for it. As it has been told many times, an American seaman, who had deserted from the sloop-of-war *Halifax*, encountered his late captain on the streets of Norfolk. Before an admiring crowd he told the officer, in picturesque speech, exactly what he thought of him and all his ways. Such an insult was a profound shock to the dignity of the entire staff of His Majesty's Navy. It was deemed absolutely necessary to recover the man and punish him, regardless of consequences. And it may be remarked in passing that they claimed to have caught and hanged him.

"Whether this tale is true or not, it is certain that Captain Humphreys of the *Leopard* was bent upon humiliating

our Navy, and, to the usual arrogance of his class, added the violence of a stupid bully. He expected his orders to be obeyed instantly and, without giving our Commodore time to compose a reply to his insulting proposition, signalled for the immediate return of his lieutenant. This officer went back to the *Leopard* and reported what he had seen. He described the littered condition of the decks and the obvious unpreparedness of the *Chesapeake* to engage a vessel of her own size, much less a 56-gun frigate. I have no doubt they chuckled over these facts, nor was Captain Humphreys surprised or disappointed when he learned of Commodore Barron's attitude toward having his vessel searched by a British officer.

“‘Ho, ho!’ the brave Captain Humphreys may have exclaimed, ‘We’ll teach the insolent Yankees a lesson. Tell the gunners to light their matches.’

“On the *Chesapeake*, Commodore Barron, having sent a boat with a message to Captain Humphreys saying that he must decline to comply with the latter’s demands, went on deck, and for the first time observed the *Leopard*. He noted that the crew were at their quarters, that the lower sails were furled, and that the matches of the gunners were alight. She was ready to go into action at the word of command, and yet the Commodore could not believe that he was seriously menaced. He not unnaturally assumed that these warlike preparations were nothing more than a bluff, a show of force calculated to intimidate a weak-kneed captain such as might be found on a merchant ship. That more was intended, Commodore Barron could not seriously suppose. Nevertheless he ordered Captain Gordon to call his crew to quarters and take what measures he could to be

prepared to fight if the unexpected happened. He knew that his ship was hopelessly outclassed, but he was not a coward to be intimidated by a bullying Englishman.

“Even if they could have made a defense worthy of the name, the men on the American vessel were given scant time for preparation. Shortly after the British lieutenant had reached the *Leopard* a hail came from her which our Commodore could not understand. The next communication was a broadside, fired point blank at the *Chesapeake*. For fifteen minutes the British continued blazing away at a ship they knew could not fight back.

“At the first blast Commodore Barron and one of his aides were wounded. This, however, did not prevent the Commodore from doing all he could to put his vessel in action, although his task was an impossible one. It was now discovered that her equipment was deficient. They were short of rammers. There were no wads, gunlocks or powder horns. They were a long time in finding the priming powder, and when they did discover it there were no matches to ignite it. A few guns were loaded, but they had no means of letting them off. All this, while the British were pouring broadside after broadside into the *Chesapeake*. Commodore Barron knew that sooner or later he must lower his flag in surrender. That was inevitable. To do so without firing one shot in return was too humiliating, and he waited until this was accomplished. Lieutenant Allen brought up a live coal from the galley in his naked hands and, with this, one cannon was discharged. After that the flag of the *Chesapeake* was lowered.

“Then a British officer came aboard and, mustering the crew, took away four of them whom he claimed as desert-

ers. Commodore Barron asked to be informed what they meant to do with his ship. To this Captain Humphreys replied that he was not interested in the *Chesapeake*. He was not making war upon the United States. All that he wished to do was to search her. That he had done, and he hoped that in the future the American Commodore would be more prompt in obeying his orders. With that he sailed away, well satisfied with the lesson he had taught the 'insolent Yankees.'

"Now, curiously enough, the Yankees did learn at least one lesson from this incident, although it was hardly the one Captain Humphreys had meant to teach. Our naval officers when they heard the tale, studied the details and gave considerable thought to them. The *Leopard* had been in a most advantageous position when she had fired her broadsides into the *Chesapeake*. She was attacking an unresisting ship. The sea was like a millpond. No conditions could be better for completely disabling a vessel, and yet, after firing for fully fifteen minutes, the damage done was comparatively insignificant. There were twenty casualties but only three men were killed. The sails were cut by grape and the masts somewhat injured. If this was a specimen of what the mighty British Navy could do, our officers saw no reason to fear them. Metaphorically, Hull and Decatur and Stewart and Bainbridge looked each other in the eye and winked. They had heard, as had all the world, that nothing could withstand England on the seas. It was an accepted fact that Great Britain had the best ships, the best officers, and the best gunners; that they were unbeatable. And yet all that one of their 56-gun frigates could do against an unresisting light cruiser during fifteen minutes of point-

blank cannonading was to cut up her rigging a bit. Our officers never forgot the lesson Captain Humphreys, of His Majesty's Navy, had been at such pains to teach them.

"Commodore Barron returned to Hampton Roads and reported his experience with the *Leopard*. When the people of the United States heard of it they were extremely angry and held it in memory, although years passed before our Government did more than issue letters of protest. There was a demand that we retaliate; in answer to which President Jefferson ordered all English ships out of our ports and told them to stay out until they made reparation for the outrage they had committed. This scarcely served even to annoy the British, who continued to patrol our coasts; and our people were not satisfied. So the clever politicians made a party issue of the matter, and before long there were Americans who actually insisted that Captain Humphreys was well within his rights. And, to bolster up this contention, and also to give the appearance of doing something, they found a scapegoat in Commodore Barron. They suspended him from the service for five years. Captain Gordon was censured. Nothing was done to the contractors who made money out of the supplies which they had neglected to put aboard the *Chesapeake*. Grafters we call them in these days.

"Now you see why the *Constitution* was not relieved. Also you get a hint of how difficult it is to get along with powerful neighbors who give consideration only to those who have the strength to command it. We have no reason to believe that this condition has changed a particle since 1807."

## CHAPTER XV

It is not to be supposed that Mr. Shepard talked continuously about these past events. There were pauses in the narrative to discuss the model which was beginning to have its yards set in place. Often a visitor would come in, putting an end to the talk for a time. Grandmother Shepard now and then drove them out of doors, declaring that her grandson was spending too many hours in the house. Thus the days were slipping into weeks while the story of 'Old Iron-sides' was being told.

Joe was inclined to laugh at himself because he was at first decidedly annoyed by these interruptions. He was not ready to admit that he liked history, and yet he wanted the story to march on. It was like waiting for an instalment in an interesting continued story. He wanted to know what happened next and was impatient of delays. It was only upon consideration that he decided that, after all, these occasional halts were not such a bad idea. It gave him a chance to ponder a bit over what he had heard. This wasn't a haphazard tale invented by somebody. One incident led to another or grew out of conditions which had resulted from previous conditions, all quite logically when you could look back after a sufficient lapse of time to view the events as a whole. On second thought Joe decided it was rather a good thing to stop now and then to make sure in his own mind that he had not missed anything.

It was a rainy day when the chance offered to go on with the story.

"No one will drive us out of the house today," Mr. Shepard observed with a chuckle.

"And we're not likely to have any visitors, either," remarked Joe. "By the way, Grandfather, the *Constitution* is still in the Mediterranean."

"Well, we shall have to bring her home," Mr. Shepard began. "As a result of the encounter between the *Leopard* and *Chesapeake* our old ship sailed for the United States without waiting for a relief. She arrived during the Autumn of 1807 and was sent at once to New York where the crew were paid off.

"Then she was laid up for repairs and a general overhauling, which, it was discovered later, had been rather badly needed.

"This took until August, 1809, when she was again in commission as flag-ship of the northern squadron under Commodore Rogers. There was considerable discussion at the time in regard to her armament. The English captains who had seen her declared emphatically that she carried too many heavy guns. Much was said back and forth about it, and most histories give considerable attention to the number and kind of cannon she carried. I can't see at this late date that it makes a great deal of difference to us whether she carried thirty or thirty-two long 24-pounders. Technically it may be interesting in comparing her with other vessels of her type; but for us I don't think it matters. It is a fact that, for one reason or another, after her stay in the New York yards, she lost some of her excellent sailing qualities. She seems to have been a sensitive old lady, who resented being too heavily loaded. After a year Commodore Rogers gave her up, and made the *President* his flag-ship.

“She was then handed over to Isaac Hull, now a captain. You remember him, of course. He was a lieutenant under Captain Nicholson on the first cruise the *Constitution* ever made. He had charge of her deck when Commodore Talbot won that cask of Madeira from the English captain off the South American coast. Also he was the first of Commodore Preble’s ‘good boys’ who were to make themselves and the old ship famous. In the Mediterranean he had commanded the *Argus*, and he is considered one of the finest seamen we had in the Navy at that time.

“I can’t help thinking that Captain Hull was pleased to be in command of the *Constitution*. He must have been fond of her. Sailors develop an affection for ships, and ‘Old Ironsides’ seems to have had qualities which won the hearts of her commanders. At any rate Captain Hull must have felt very much at home when he paced her decks.

“As there were no cables to Europe, or fast steamships, or wireless communication, the Government used the vessels of our Navy as messengers to keep our diplomatic agents informed of our changing policies and to transport them to the countries to which they were accredited. It was on such a mission that the *Constitution* was detailed in the spring of 1811. We were sending Mr. Barlow as our new Minister to France and also some money we owed the Dutch for ammunition bought during our War of the Revolution. The *Constitution* was ready in May and went to Annapolis for her passengers. There she was kept waiting, for it was not until August that Mr. Barlow arrived, with his wife and sister-in-law, to set out for Cherbourg.

“An account of that voyage has come down to us, written by a sailor named Moses Smith, in which he gives us an

idea of the life of the enlisted man aboard a battle-ship. It has been the popular notion that the crews of that time were forced to lead a somewhat miserable existence. There was only a small space for the accommodation of the four hundred or more who composed the personnel. There was no ventilation to speak of on the lower decks, and it must have been a bit stuffy in wet weather with all the hatches battened down. Ice machines were unknown, so the food had to be of a kind that did not spoil. Likely enough on a long voyage everybody grew tired of salt beef, salt pork and stale bread, the principle items of their diet. For all that, I don't think we need shed tears over the dreadful lot of the poor sailor man of those days. We might just as well be sorry for the people ashore who had no refrigerators or open plumbing, telephones or automobiles, and a thousand and one conveniences which we insist are essential to our existence. You may be quite sure that they were not sorry for themselves. They were entirely satisfied with their way of living, because they didn't know of a better. And so it was with the American sailor. He had grown up in ships since he was a boy and was hardened to his life. On board the *Constitution* it was not intended that the men should lead a lazy existence. They were flogged when they weren't as smart as their officers expected them to be, or for seemingly trivial offenses. Smith mentions several instances of this sort, one in particular of a chap who was forever throwing a lassoo at his mates and interfering with their work; doing it for the fun of the thing, I suppose, and at length he was given half a dozen whacks on the back. Even this didn't stop him, so it could not have been so dreadfully cruel a punishment as it is usually pictured. He kept right on doing

his little stunt until at length he had to be put in irons. This is an instance of the sort of prank which these hardy sailors played on one another. They were evidently a good deal like a crowd of schoolboys who needed a strong hand to keep them in order. Smith mentions one or two fellows who were so depressed by their surroundings that they wanted to kill themselves, but cases of this sort must have been exceedingly rare. Indeed Moses himself seems to have enjoyed the life he led. As to the floggings, of which he had his own experiences, he says that the officers were entirely justified, for he realized in after years how necessary strict discipline was to such a vessel.

“It seems a fact that the men in the British Navy were treated somewhat brutally. Being forced to serve caused a bitter resentment which expressed itself in sullen and reluctant response to orders. In the American Navy the men enlisted voluntarily, chose their own ships, were well cared for and better paid.

“So I think we may, in a measure, discount the tales of awful cruelty and hardships aboard the *Constitution* and her sister ships of the American fleet. We can picture the crews as neither unhappy nor victims of an inhuman authority.

“On the way to Cherbourg, ‘Old Ironsides’ met a series of heavy gales in which she labored clumsily. Moses Smith gives us a glimpse of Captain Hull on the deck of his ship. Evidently he was something of a dandy in the matter of dress, and very attentive to his lady passengers. He was much concerned for their comfort and doubtless regretted his inability to control the weather, which was very bad. There were days when it blew so violently that the *Constitution* raced before the gale under bare poles. When the

storm was at its worst, we find Captain Hull in the midst of his men, a very human sort of person. He encouraged them, bantered them a bit to keep up their spirits, called them his 'boys,' and was not above asking the boatswain for his opinion.

"As was all too usual aboard ship those days, they had a severe epidemic of plague. The crowded conditions under which they were obliged to live were favorable to the development of such diseases. Moreover their doctors had no real acquaintance with the deadly little germs which we have learned to know so intimately, and the methods of combating sickness were much less adequate. There was talk aboard the *Constitution* of fumigating the vessel with sulphur, which suggests that they may have had an inkling of what was causing the trouble. However they decided not to do it, being by no means sure that the proposed remedy was not worse than the malady. For a time the attack was severe, two or three men dying every day, the plague striking them down with only a few hours warning. Strangely enough the seamen were little concerned. They joked about it. Dying, seemingly, was not so fearful a thing in the view of these hardy tars, who all their lives had been facing death in some form or other. Which, I suppose, is an excellent quality in a fighting man, though it does appear somewhat grim.

"After a comparatively quick voyage of five weeks, the *Constitution* arrived off Cherbourg, and at once came into contact with the British squadron blockading that port. The relations between the two nations were far from cordial and the respective navies naturally reflected these sentiments. The chief trouble, which we discussed the other day, was

over the ocean trade and the seizure of our ships and sailors; so the marine forces of England and America were especially concerned.

You may be sure that the encounter of the *Chesapeake* and *Leopard* was in the minds of all abroad the *Constitution*, and they were wondering what sort of treatment they would receive now that they were, so to speak, in the enemy's waters. One thing was quite certain. Captain Hull did not intend to be caught napping. The log of the *Constitution* shows entry after entry of the men being called to quarters when an English war vessel acted suspiciously. His equipment was in first class condition and his men ready and willing. I sometimes think they were rather disappointed that officious captains of the Humphreys type did not make a demand to search their vessel. Such a suggestion would have been warmly received.

"While there was no actual fighting there were many annoyances, and veiled threats a-plenty. As soon as they had anchored, a message was sent from the British flag-ship requesting the American captain to visit their commodore before he moved his vessel. Such a request, in the circumstances, amounted almost to a command; and, so far as Captain Hull personally was concerned, he would as lief have visited the British commodore as not. It was not, however, a matter of his own inclination alone. He was a representative of our Government and could not obey orders except those given him by a superior officer of his own nationality. He returned a courteous note saying he was sorry he was too busy to comply with the requests, or some other polite excuse. Another message from the flag-ship came promptly, requesting, for no specified reason, that the

*Constitution* delay her entry into Cherbourg. To this Captain Hull replied that he had the American Minister to France on board and that it was necessary to land him as soon as the weather permitted.

“There does not appear to have been any cause for these ‘requests’. Even the English could find no excuse for stopping an American frigate from going into a French port with the representative of her country. There was no intention of giving aid or comfort to His Majesty’s enemies. Nevertheless, there was an implied threat in these notes, and Captain Hull was by no means sure he would not have to fight his way into the harbor. It took a man of considerable courage to maintain the independence of his country while the ship he commanded lay under the guns of a fleet of vessels whose officers were only too eager to find an excuse for hostile action. Upon every possible occasion these British naval gentlemen ridiculed our sea forces. They laughed at what they called our ‘fir-built’ ships; by which they meant that we had constructed them of pine and that, therefore, they were of a quality inferior to their own vessels, which were a product of the ‘oaks of old England’. They sneered at our flag, were contemptuous of our seamen on both forecastle and quarter-deck, and were constantly on the alert to humiliate our service. It was this spirit which animated the officers of His Majesty’s Navy and had it not been for strict orders from their Admiralty, they would have gone to any lengths in their efforts to embarrass our commanders.

“All these things Captain Hull knew right well, and during the time he spent in Europe he had great need to be upon his guard. He had to preserve the dignity of the

nation he represented and at the same time act in such a fashion that no move of his could be twisted into a pretext for an open conflict. It is highly probable that the English commodore, remembering the affair of the *Leopard* and *Chesapeake*, conceived the brilliant idea of scaring the Yankees out of a year's growth and had no other motive for making his vague requests. Upon this occasion it did not work. When he was ready, Captain Hull took the *Constitution* into Cherbourg and landed his passengers.

"His next concern was to deliver the money we owed the Dutch, and he sailed for the Texel. Here there was another English squadron bent upon making trouble for us. They did all they could to keep Captain Hull from fulfilling his mission. In an effort to get us into difficulties with the Dutch government they insisted we had made a false statement about the draft of the frigate. Hull had stated truthfully that she drew 23 feet. To this the English sneeringly retorted that we were trying to exaggerate the size of the *Constitution*, that she couldn't draw that much because there were only nineteen feet of water over the bar which had been crossed to enter the harbor. That is the sort of petty business Captain Hull was constantly subjected to. He kept his temper, held his ship in readiness for anything that might happen and went on with his duties.

"According to Moses Smith, the landing of the money was a somewhat delicate operation. The English had vowed that they would not permit it, on the assumption that it was contraband. As a matter of fact they wanted it themselves, and made this a colorable excuse to take it if they could, short of attacking our ship. Nevertheless, Captain Hull landed it by a method which shows us an interesting custom

obtaining among seafaring men of that day and having the force of a law. It had been agreed that in no circumstances should a boat carrying provisions and water to a vessel ever be fired upon. Captain Hull needed both food and water. In one of the boats used for this purpose the gold for the Dutch was sent ashore, and the British dared not fire upon her. Thus Captain Hull succeeded in accomplishing the second errand upon which he had been sent.

“From the Texel, the *Constitution* returned to Cherbourg to pick up Mr. Rogers and some others who were to be taken to England. When she arrived off the French harbor the British squadron was still there, and two of their frigates stood up beside her and sailed in, wishing to give the impression that three hostile vessels were menacing the town. There had been an arrangement made on the previous trip that the *Constitution* was to display a special signal. For some reason or other it was not made, or not understood. At any rate the French forts opened fire upon the advancing frigates, as was only reasonable where no one could trust a ship not to fly any flag she chose in an effort to deceive an opponent.

“In spite of the cannonade, ‘Old Ironsides’ went straight on as if nothing were happening. The English ships soon decided that they had gone far enough, and turned back. This move gave the French a hint of what had occurred and they ceased fire. They apologized profusely, though none could blame them for their action. This was just another instance of the sort of thing the British were doing to make it as disagreeable for Captain Hull as they could. They hoped a lucky shot from the forts might sink the *Constitution*. It would have pleased them mightily and perhaps have made

trouble between France and America. As a matter of fact the ship was struck twice, smashing a boat lying in the waist and causing a curious little tragedy. When the shot hit, a midshipman, who was passing at the moment, fell upon the deck. It was thought that he had been struck either by the ball itself or by splinters from the shattered boat. He was taken to the surgery in the cockpit and examined. There was not a mark upon him, and yet in a day or two he died. Perhaps it was the shock that killed the poor lad. No explanation was ever found, and the bare facts make the incident unaccountable.

“With Mr. Rogers and a few other passengers, Captain Hull sailed out of Cherbourg once more, this time headed for the English harbor of Portsmouth. A less sturdy commander would have hesitated to beard the British Lion in his den after the late unfriendly experience; but Hull had his orders and he intended to carry them out. He must have had a great faith in his vessel and in his crew. At any rate he wasn’t afraid, and if it had been the aim of the English officers to scare him off they now realized their mistake. The *Constitution* landed her passengers at Portsmouth on November 12th, and Captain Hull, doubtless on official business, accompanied Mr. Rogers to London, leaving ‘Old Ironsides’ in the charge of her first lieutenant, Charles Morris. You remember him? It was from his diary that we caught our first glimpse of Commodore Preble on his way to the Mediterranean. He was one of the ‘good boys’ and accompanied Decatur on the *Intrepid* when the *Philadelphia* was burned. And now he was on the *Constitution* and temporarily in command.

“The evening after Captain Hull had gone, a lieutenant

from the English frigate, *Havannah*, which lay nearby, came aboard our ship upon a seemingly friendly mission. He explained to Lieutenant Morris that one of the latter's crew had been found swimming alongside the *Havannah* and picked up. Our Lieutenant thanked him heartily and said he would go over in the morning and bring the deserter back. Mr. Morris was most agreeably surprised at this unusual civility, and I have no doubt invited the Englishman into his cabin and entertained him cordially.

"The next morning he presented himself to the commanding officer of the *Havannah*, prepared to say nice and polite things for the favor which had been shown. Certainly he must have believed that the English captain's intention was amicable. In this he was entirely mistaken. The commander of the *Havannah* freely admitted that he had a deserter from the *Constitution*. He would not, however, give him up without specific instructions from Sir Roger Curtis, admiral of the fleet. This stand put the incident upon an entirely different footing. Instead of an exchange of courtesies between the officers of two ships, it became an official and somewhat diplomatic affair. Lieutenant Morris went to Sir Roger and made a formal demand for an American seaman named Thomas Holland, a deserter from the United States frigate, *Constitution*.

"I fancy our Lieutenant was careful in the observance of etiquette upon this occasion. He had been instructed by Commodore Preble, and it isn't likely that the Admiral could find any fault with the young American officer's deportment.

"'Well,' he remarked at length, 'I don't know about giving this man up to you. Would you surrender a British seaman who had deserted to your vessel?'

“‘I’m certain,’ Lieutenant Morris replied, ‘that Captain Hull would be glad to make an arrangement to effect the return of deserters.’

“‘Humph!’ grunted Sir Roger, and talked further around the subject. At length he informed the American officer that the man Thomas Holland claimed to be an Englishman.

“‘Have you any evidence of that?’ asked Morris.

“‘None whatever,’ returned the Admiral with an ironic smile, ‘nevertheless I feel obliged to take his word for it.’

“Lieutenant Morris went back to the *Constitution* without Thomas Holland. He had discovered that there had never been any intention of giving up the deserter. The elaborate gesture of friendliness was an effort to be funny, or else it had been prompted by a desire to exasperate a young officer into doing something which would give a plausible excuse for retaliation. The *Constitution* was surrounded by British ships and on board of these were a host of ‘gentlemen’ who would hail with delight a chance to blow her up. Lieutenant Morris knew full well that there was nothing he could do. It would be the height of folly to make the slightest demonstration of hostility over a deserting sailor. He had to grit his teeth and take his medicine with as good a grace as he could muster.

“He was determined, however, that there should be no repetition of the incident. He gave strict orders to guard against further desertions and instructed his marines to fire upon anything seen floating near the ship.

“Four days later, about eight o’clock in the evening, Morris heard the discharge of a musket on deck and went at once to investigate. He was told that there was a man in the

water and, thinking it one of his crew, had a boat lowered. They soon had the fellow aboard and a very cheerful surprise he proved to be. Instead of being a deserter from the *Constitution* he was a stout Irish lad named John Burns who had swum over from the *Havannah*.

“‘And what are you doing here?’ demanded Charles Morris, making an effort to keep his face straight.

“‘Sure, your worship, Oi’m an American that’s pressed into the British Navy. It’s me heart that’s broke entirely bein’ took away from me own dear land and ’tis certain Oi’ am, your honor, that you’ll niver sind me back to toil and moil—’

“That I fancy is about as far as John went. Lieutenant Morris cut him short and sent him below with instructions that he should be tenderly treated. Then gleefully, with many chuckles of satisfaction, he sent a boat to the *Havannah* with the information that he held a deserter from that ship.

“The next day the demand for Burns was made by a very correct English lieutenant.

“‘This sailor claims to be an American,’ Morris remarked, the words coming very easily to his lips.

“‘Have you any evidence that he is an American?’

“‘None whatever, nevertheless I feel obliged to take his word for it.’

“Of course Lieutenant Morris could not resist so good a chance to turn the tables. He did say finally that in exchange for Thomas Holland, he would give up John Burns.

“The exchange was not made. Nothing further was done officially. Unofficially the incident increased the tension be-

tween the personnel of the two navies, which already had almost reached the breaking point. There was much gossip in the town over it and it came to the ears of our officers that the English were saying openly that the Yankees needed another lesson. They vowed to recover the deserter from the *Havannah* if they were obliged to blow the *Constitution* out of the water either in the harbor or at sea.

“Such was the state of affairs when Captain Hull returned to his ship. He listened to Lieutenant Morris’s report, commended him for his action and proposed to back him to the limit in the matter of returning John Burns. All the same he was not easy in his mind about the situation and would not have been greatly surprised if, sooner or later, the *Constitution* found herself involved in serious trouble before she was at sea again. To make matters worse two English frigates had come in and anchored one on each side of his ship, so close that it would be difficult to get out of the harbor. The English were trying in every way they could to induce the crew to desert. Our officers ashore were constantly meeting British lieutenants or midshipmen bent upon quarreling. Every hour the *Constitution* remained at Portsmouth increased the chances of an open break. Captain Hull determined to change his anchorage and took aboard a pilot for that purpose. The latter expressed a doubt of his ability to avoid hitting one or another of the two nearby frigates. Hull, in no very good humor, after this siege of constant annoyances, told him to go ahead and foul the English ships if he couldn’t get out in any other way.

“Fortunately the *Constitution* cleared these vessels without touching either. She found a new anchorage; but im-

mediately one of the British war-ships followed. So threatening was this move that Captain Hull called his men to quarters once more.

“‘Boys,’ he said, when they were mustered, ‘they’re sending a frigate after us. Are you ready to fight?’

“He was answered by a cheer from the entire ship’s company. Even the men in irons begged a chance to defend the flag, vowing to avenge the *Chesapeake*. They went to their stations with a will and an officer, passing along the gun-deck, remarked that he expected good service from them.

“‘Let the quarter-deck look out for the colors,’ came the prompt reply. ‘We’ll look after the guns, down here.’

“Happily nothing eventuated. It is highly probable that the Admiral, obeying instructions from London, issued orders which put a curb upon the impetuous officers of his fleet. At any rate, when the time came, the *Constitution* put to sea with John Burns still aboard, and no one hindered her.

“Once again she stopped at Cherbourg and Lieutenant Morris went to Paris for despatches from Mr. Barlow. Here he was kept for six weeks, catching glimpses of Napoleon, meeting General Lafayette and having a most entertaining visit. Upon his return, the *Constitution* sailed for America and after another stormy passage arrived safely at Old Point Comfort.

## CHAPTER XVI

“THE treatment to which Captain Hull was subjected on that trip to Europe which we were talking of last week exactly illustrates what the attitude of the British was toward the United States. Officially their government wished to avoid an open rupture with us; but not from any fear of the outcome, or because they regretted their high-handed action on the seas. The gentlemen who ruled England were concerned only with the contest they were waging with the restless Bonaparte. They cared nothing for international law, for the common decencies that should be observed between independent countries, or for the sensibilities of a people struggling to put a young republic on its feet. The truth is they didn’t want our young republic to grow strong enough to walk alone.

“It is far from my intention or desire to revive old animosities. Many changes have come in the more than one hundred years that have passed since 1812. There were at that time many people in our own country who attempted to defend the British point of view. It is to be regretted that their expressed opinions were guided by their political fortunes and, on that account, are of no value. Later a contention was made that any means to curb Bonaparte were warranted. Whether or not his supposed ambition to conquer the world justified England in assuming a dictatorship of the seas is a question so involved with national prejudices that a discussion of it would lead nowhere, even at this late date. What does concern us is the justification of the United

States in declaring war on England; and we cannot arrive at any conclusion about that if we are to gloss over the facts, out of regard for the susceptibilities of the present generation.

“It must not be forgotten that the people and government of our country were most reluctant to take up arms, a sentiment as acute in those days as in these. We are inclined, I think, in looking back upon those events, to marvel at their patience and long-suffering. For twenty years the British naval officers had been impressing our sailors off American ships, in utter disregard of the rights of the men or the welfare of the vessels so depleted of their crews that their safety was often jeopardized.

“According to their standpoint, a man who spoke English was an Englishman, unless he could prove himself an American; which he never could to the satisfaction of a British captain whose craft was short-handed. All told, there must have been some twenty thousand seamen seized in this way, and still we continued to seek a peaceful adjustment of such outrages.

“As with the sailors, so with our ships. They were taken wherever sighted. Not one or two but countless numbers of them, until only the hardiest of adventurers dared to go out from our shores. English men-of-war patrolled our coast from end to end as rigorously as they did the shores of France, with whose people they were at war. In retaliation President Jefferson cut us off from trading with anyone; a measure exactly suiting the English merchant marine, whose members were most anxious for the annihilation of our thriving commerce, which this order very nearly accom-

plished. The only good purpose it served was to throw our sailors out of work so that they were glad to join our Navy, thus giving that service a pick of our seamen.

“Such, generally, was the situation when Mr. Jefferson ended his second term and was followed by Mr. James Madison of Virginia. The latter was a peace-loving, sensitive gentleman, of much refinement and culture. War with anybody was the last thing he wanted, so, with much patience and great willingness to reconcile our difficulties with England, he strove through two long years to arrive at an amicable settlement. You see we were not a touchy, sword-rattling, uncompromising people, ready to fight at the drop of a hat.

“And a time came when Mr. Madison’s efforts seemed to hold out high promise of success and it looked as if he had ironed out the rough places in our relations with His Majesty’s Government. The British Minister at Washington was finally convinced that we had a just cause for complaint. So certain was he of our desire for fair dealing and so satisfied with the correctness of our contentions that he virtually promised that his government would withdraw its most drastic orders. On the strength of this assurance President Madison revoked the edict against our trading with England, and there was great rejoicing throughout the land.

“The threat of war had been hanging over the heads of the people, and this rift in the cloud let in a ray of very welcome sunshine. The move was hailed as the first in the reestablishment of complete accord, and they believed it was only a question of a short time until the vexed controversy over our sailors’ rights would be adjusted with satisfaction to

both sides. We were delighted that our patience was bearing pacific fruit, and everyone made ready to go on with the work of building up the country.

“Most unfortunately, the British Government repudiated the assurances of its Minister to Washington. Seizures of ships and sailors went on with renewed vigor, and our people, reacting from their joy at an anticipated solution of all their troubles with England, grew angry and bitter. Being mild in their demands, long-suffering under flagrant injustice, forbearing in the face of gross insult, brought no consideration whatever. The English were as convinced as the Barbary pirates had been that we would not fight for our rights and, like Jussuf Caramalli and his brother Moslems, they also wanted tribute. They told our merchants that if they desired to trade with France they must pay an indemnity to the British Government for the privilege. They kept piling on the load they were forcing us to carry, not recognizing that already they had reached almost to the point of the proverbial last straw.

“You would think that this often-times inhuman treatment of our sailors and the complete wiping out of our maritime commerce would have satisfied the English, who pleaded that these measures were necessary in their struggle with that ogre Napoleon. You would expect that these Orders in Council were sufficiently irritating when applied to a people with whom friendship was officially expressed. Not at all. They were convinced that no matter what they did we must take it lying down. So, with the same disregard for the decencies which they had exhibited in our Revolution, they used all their influence to stir up the Indians on our western frontier, then the Territory of Indiana, where

small settlements of pioneer Americans were beginning to clear the land. Dreadful massacres were perpetrated to the profit of the British fur traders.

“Nor was that the end of English guile. Canadian agents came down into New England, whispering into the ears of discontented merchants and half-hearted Americans with Tory instincts that Great Britain would make it well worth their while to secede. This was a very serious matter indeed. Doubtless there was a denial that the British Government had anything to do officially with the massacres in Indiana or the attempt to separate the States. Nevertheless, when the war came, the Indians were fighting for the English and, officially or not, there was a plot to make New England again a British Colony.

“A time came, as of course it was bound to, when people began to say to each other that it does not pay to be peaceful and forgiving. The policy of non-resistance might be righteous and theoretically correct. The trouble with it was that you not only received a slap in the face but were laughed at as well. Not to resist an insult quickly led to another worst than the first. The man in the street began to say out loud that something would have to be done about it.

“There was only one thing left to do, and President Madison set his face against war. One cannot blame him, because he knew full well that we were not prepared for it.

“Moreover he was reluctant to believe that the British were stirring up trouble in New England and setting the Indians on the warpath in Indiana. It was only after repeated evidence of these conspiracies that he and the gentlemen of his cabinet were brought to consider the possibility of fighting. A growing conviction that there actually was a move-

ment on foot to separate the States, that the Indians were incited to their acts of cruelty, added to an increasing demand for retaliation on the part of the great majority of our people, finally began to break down President Madison's resistance. His own political adherents were clamoring for war. The only sympathy he could find for his position came from a pacifist party composed mainly of his political opponents who had proved themselves much more interested in their own fortunes than in the prosperity of their country.

"So, finally, President Madison was forced to give heed to the insistence of those who were convinced that if we were to hold the rights and privileges of a free nation, which we had won in the Revolution, we would be obliged to make another fight for them. As it was, we were allowed to do only what Great Britain was pleased to permit; and, after years of submission, the time had come for resistance. President Madison sent to Congress a report on the state of affairs between the United States and Great Britain. On the 18th of June, 1812, we declared war against England and her Territories. It has rightly been called our Second War for Independence.

"I've told these facts in some detail because it has become the fashion to insist that fighting is not necessary, that always there is a better way out if those in authority will only be patient and try to compose their differences. From 1798, (and even before), when Captain Loring of the British ship-of-the-line *Carnatic*, outraged our flag on the little cruiser *Baltimore*, and took five of her seamen, down to the days of 1812, when at last patience lost its virtue, the English people had subjected us to such a series of humiliations that they no longer held us as worthy of consideration.

"Well, having decided to go to war, I suppose the people of the United States began to take stock of what they had to fight with. From the very first they eliminated the Navy from serious consideration, as well they might. Since the reduction of both ships and personnel in 1801, nothing had been done to build up our sea forces or even to conserve what we had left. Perhaps this neglect was based on the principle of not wishing to annoy Great Britain by attempting to prepare for the inevitable. It seems amazing, as we look back, at this utter neglect in a time when scarcely a day passed without a deliberate violation of our neutrality on the seas. We did not even build a single frigate. We let the cruisers *New York*, *General Green* and *Boston*, rot in the yards. The only effort that was made was the construction of a fleet of gunboats, on the erroneous theory that with them we could defend our harbors. Commodore Preble had proved the futility of that. He had sailed the *Constitution* into the port of Tripoli, defended by numerous, well equipped craft of this type, and they had not dared to attack her. But President Jefferson was thrifty. Gunboats were cheap, and by no twist of logic could they be deemed a menace to the sea power of Great Britain, such as that nation might use as an excuse for declaring war upon us. So, altogether, we built 257 of them, later on to be allowed to disintegrate safe out of the way of the British cruisers blockading our ports.

"In one particular, wholly discounted by the politicians, who undertook to run this war, our Navy had gained. Our officers and men were well up to their work. They were young, brought up in the traditions of training and discipline fostered by Commodore Preble. They had grown to have a fine pride in their flag and what it stood for. They remem-

bered the affair of the *Chesapeake* and the lesson the captain of the *Leopard* unknowingly had been at such pains to teach them; and they were convinced that ship for ship they could hold their own. They wanted a chance to try anyway and, literally, they had to beg for it.

“The President, the gentlemen of his Cabinet and of Congress, as I said, practically dismissed consideration of the Navy in their program for fighting England. They concentrated their efforts on the development of our Army, which also had been neglected during the years of our submission. They had an idea that it was much easier to accumulate a fighting force on land. Men were more readily come by than frigates and ships-of-the-line. It took no time at all to assemble an army—on paper! And that is what they did, with the intention of over-running Canada and thereby forcing England to give us the freedom of the seas for which we had gone to war. They proved it a fatuous scheme for, no matter what may be said, soldiers are not born. They have to be trained for the job, as most of us realize when we stop to think about it. With the disasters which overtook our Army we have nothing to do here; yet it is well to keep in mind that events proved the politicians to be absolutely wrong. Our militia ran away; but still, to this day, the notion persists in the minds of a surprising number of people that the defense of our country may safely be left to untrained men hastily gathered together under the spur of necessity.

“You may guess from this that our poor little Navy received scant consideration in the august councils of our Government. The various Secretaries and Congressional strategists held a firm conviction that to send one of our cruisers to sea would only be adding another unit to the British

Navy. They were obsessed with the idea that English ships and English sailors were unbeatable in any circumstances. In fairness to these gentlemen, it must be said that their conviction was reasonable. 'Mistress of the Seas' was no mere figure of speech. Great Britain believed it, and so did the rest of the world. The few officers commanding our pitifully inadequate Navy were the only ones who raised their voices in opposition to this dictum. They insisted that England was Mistress of the Seas only because of the size of its fleet. They contended that, man for man, ship for ship, our little maritime force was as good as or better than theirs.

"As you might expect, their opinion went for nothing. The strategists in Washington discounted these views by saying that our sailors were inspired by a lust for fighting or some such judgment-warping bias; that the men of our Navy should know more about such matters than the politicians was quite too absurd; the British would make short work of our boasting seamen; the very boys in the streets knew that. His Majesty's Navy counted between six and seven hundred vessels, in commission. Sailing up and down our coasts, at the time of the declaration of war, were at least five ships-of-the-line, nineteen frigates, forty-one brigs and sixteen schooners, with bases at Halifax, Jamaica and the Leeward Islands, all very convenient for the disposal of prizes and for refitting.

"Against this force we had seventeen vessels all told, the largest of which were the *Constitution*, *United States* and *President*, of 44-guns each. Of the fourteen others, eight were vessels of much lighter armament than the small frigates of 28-guns. With these figures in mind, the gentlemen of our Government refused to take our Navy seriously, for-

getting that it was they who had done nothing to help it; not even having built the ships-of-the-line which had been authorized years before. They conceived that it was ridiculous to pit these few cruisers against such odds as were already in our waters, without counting the additions to her squadron Great Britain would be certain to send across the ocean. Only as an absurd procedure could President Madison and his Cabinet be brought to view such a challenge. After due consideration of the matter they concluded that the sole possibility of preserving the Navy we had, was to lay it up out of reach of the British and thus prevent the capture of our ships. Orders to that effect were sent to Commodore Rogers, and only the pleadings of Captains Bainbridge and Stewart, who happened to be in Washington at the time, saved our fighting vessels from being put away in camphor for the duration of the war. These officers, learning of this decision, obtained an interview with the President. They begged and implored him to let them go out with their ships. They realized that they could not oppose the British in squadrons; but, singly, they promised to give a good account of themselves. Moreover they could make considerable trouble for the British merchantmen sailing to the West Indies and, 'Please, Mr. President, give us a chance!' they argued. Mr. Madison consented to reopen the subject with his Cabinet if the captains would put their contentions on paper. So the two set forth their opinions as eloquently as they knew how, and sent the document in, hoping for the best.

"Their prayer was granted; not because the Cabinet expected anything or had the slightest belief in the predictions made by the enthusiastic young naval officers. Oh, no! What

tipped the scales in their favor was the ingenious argument that it was cheaper to let the British capture our ships than to continue paying for their upkeep! Our Navy was told to go ahead and get itself annihilated and not bother the busy men in Washington who were winning the war—on paper! Thus our little Navy was saved from extinction, for you may be sure the people of the United States would not have gone on paying out money to support a service organized to defend them which, when war came, hid itself for fear of getting hurt.

“It is interesting to speculate upon the reasons which inspired our naval commanders with the confidence they felt in the outcome of anything like an even contest with so formidable an enemy. There were numbers of factors which entered into their calculations. For one thing they could count upon the excellence of our crews, because a large part of our male population had been brought up in ships. Along the New England coast were many thriving towns trading in codfish and the products of the whale fisheries. Out of Salem went a fleet of East Indiamen, and from Baltimore ships sailed to German and French ports by the hundred. Thus it came about that many of our young men took to the sea, and even in merchantmen gained some experience of fighting. There were buccaneers in the West Indies; corsairs in the Mediterranean; Malay and Chinese pirates in the Far East. So our naval officers could depend upon having their cruisers smartly sailed and their guns well served. Further, the spirit of these men was an important asset. American sailors had been harried by the British for years. They had been forced to serve on English frigates and had been treated like dogs in that service. This same power was driv-

ing our merchant ships off the seas, depriving these men of their normal means of livelihood. Also it must not be forgotten that they were citizens of a young republic, and the Revolution was still too recent for the resentment against England to have subsided entirely. Great Britain had done nothing to foster friendly relations. On the contrary, during the years which had intervened since that historic struggle, the British had let no opportunity pass to emphasize our crudities and to show their contempt for the 'boorish Yankees.' They continued, therefor, to be our natural enemies; and all the bitterness of the original conflict flared up again at the prospect of this new contest. There was, too, a latent suspicion that Great Britain would like to regain her lost colonies in America; and this stirred anew the patriotism of our sailors, and the stars and stripes of their flag became doubly dear. Knowing these things, our officers counted upon their men fighting desperately to the last extremity.

"Another factor which helped to foster a feeling of confidence was the quality of the few vessels we possessed. They were good ships! Old Joshua Humphreys had seen to that. It was he who had shown the way, back in George Washington's time. So far as their construction was concerned they were as good as or better than any of their rating in the British Navy, even if the English did call them 'bundles of pine boards flying a rag of striped bunting'.

"Where courage was in question, no choice could be made. The American tar equalled his British cousin in that quality, which is fine praise for the former. On the quarter-deck or forecastle the men were equally brave in both navies.

"Apart from sheer size, the greatest difference between the two lay in their scheme of organization. England, after

years of beating France and Spain, had arrived at a state of what, in a football team, we should term 'over-confidence'. They were convinced that nobody could defeat them, that the sight of the Union Jack was enough to sap the courage of any foe, and there was a long list of victories which served to prove this contention to them. As a result of this complacent state of mind, the English naval service had deteriorated. They no longer bothered to practice. When the time came for the game they would put on their uniforms and go out on the field to another victory. Why bother to train for these games? There was really no one to give them a contest.

"Lord Nelson had settled the policy of British naval tactics; which was to run so close to your enemy that you couldn't miss and, when you had discharged a few broadsides, board her with pike and cutlass and have done with it. It was a rough and tumble method that had worked exceedingly well so far, and offered the officers and men an easy life between battles.

"Our method was wholly different. We thought it wise to aim our guns. I believe it is a fact that we were the first to experiment with sights on our cannon and we tried fastening tubes the length of the barrels. We had, from the English point of view, a child-like desire to hit the thing we aimed at, and to that end we practised at gunnery day in and day out whenever the opportunity afforded. We floated casks for targets and thought the money well spent for powder and ball to try to hit them. We trained our gun-crews, not only in accuracy but in speed as well. We wanted to hit the other fellow and we wanted to hit him early and often. So the men practised all the manœuvres necessary to clean, load and fire their weapons while a lieutenant stood at hand

to time them. As in gunnery, so it was in seamanship. The sailors were trained to handle the sails and rigging without loss of a moment, to the end that the ship might be put quickly in a position to take advantage of an enemy or to avoid destructive fire. It was not the aim of our officers to go into an engagement hammer and tongs. They preferred to put a ship out of action without boarding her and so save many lives.

“You will observe, then, that there was a difference in method between the two navies. Which was the better had yet to be proved. The English officers smiled at our enthusiasm for training, while, perhaps, they admitted its theoretical advantages. They contended, however, that battles were not won with theories, and continued to smile, for a time.

“Now we have an idea what the conditions were before this serious game of war began in 1812. The next time we have a chance to talk we’ll see what happened.”

## CHAPTER XVII

“A DECLARATION of war in the days of 1812 was different from the proceeding in this century. Then there was no electric communication to flash the news to the world that the United States had gone to war with Great Britain and her territories. Usually the first notice of such a conflict was an attack upon the enemy’s possessions, be they forts or ships. Therefore, it was customary for the country about to start the conflict to withhold its challenge until it was ready to strike a telling blow. Considering the odds against us, it would have been wise to delay our first hostile move until all our fighting ships were ready to go to sea before the English could concentrate their forces and blockade our harbors with their ships-of-the-line and heavy frigates. So little consideration did the Government at Washington give to our Navy that they ignored the fact that our fleet, united at the outset, might have done considerable damage to the British squadron in our waters. It would have taken at least a month before the news of the war could have reached London and another month for reinforcements sent from there to arrive on this side of the Atlantic. Meanwhile we might have done a bit of blockading ourselves at Halifax and Jamaica. Such a sensible procedure does not seem to have entered the minds of our Washington strategists. So, while the ships of our little naval force were scattered about or undergoing repairs, Congress announced its decision, and our determination to fight the English was public property. In these circumstances our naval officers dared not delay a moment. Commodore

Rogers had ready the flag-ship *President* and the *Hornet*. He sent word to all the other vessels to join him, and toward the end of the month the *United States*, *Congress* and *Argus* were assembled at the port of New York. Having information of a considerable fleet of English merchantmen coming up the American coast from Jamaica under convoy, the Commodore determined to take his squadron out to sea and strike the first blow.

“On the 23rd of June he fell in with the English frigate *Belvidera* and gave chase. The wind was light and the *President*, outsailing her companion ships, was soon all by herself in the pursuit. About four o’clock in the afternoon Commodore Rogers, thinking they were near enough to try a shot or two at the English vessel, fired the first gun of the war with his own hand. There followed a spirited exchange in which we were getting much the better of the argument when a bow gun on the lower deck of the *President* burst, killing or wounding sixteen men. The explosion blew up the forecastle deck, throwing the Commodore high in the air and breaking his leg.

“It was a demoralizing and unfortunate accident as it turned out. The *Belvidera* escaped and took the news to Halifax that the United States had opened war, whereupon the English fleet lost no time in going out to meet the challenge. I am telling this much of the beginning of operations because it had a decided bearing upon the first experience of the *Constitution* in this conflict. She had returned to old Point Comfort after her trip to Europe early in 1812, and in March went up the Potomac to the Washington Navy Yard for a thorough overhauling. Captain Hull, who knew how well she could sail when properly loaded, was much

dissatisfied with the way she had behaved on this last voyage. He obtained permission from the Navy Department to make the changes necessary to bring back her excellent sailing qualities, and set to work at once. To help him, he had the man in charge of the yard, Nathaniel Haraden, who had been sailing master on the *Constitution* during the war with Tripoli. He, too, knew what the ship should be able to do when she was right, so together they talked it over.

“‘She’s as stiff as a poker, with all that ballast they put in her up in New York,’ Hull protested.

“‘Aye, and she’s got too many heavy guns on her spar-deck,’ is the likely reply. So, in perfect accord they petted the old ship until she shone from the new copper on her bottom to the fresh varnish on her trucks. They removed a third of her ballast and stowed the rest to fit her best sailing trim and when they had finished with her she was as good, or better than she had ever been. Which was exceedingly lucky, for her sailing qualities were shortly to be severely tested.

“She was still at the Washington Navy Yard when news was received that the country was at war. There is a note in her log for June 20th which seems significant to me. It says that the crew was mustered and the declaration against England was read to them by Lieutenant Read. Then comes the interesting touch: ‘The Crew manifested their Zeal in Support of the Honor of the United States Flagg by requesting leave to Cheer.’ Can’t you almost see the boatswain stepping forward with a salute and saying, ‘May we cheer, sir?’ Leave was ‘granted them,’ and it is on record that they lifted their voices in unison to show that they might be counted upon to fight for the flag with all their strength. To me it is amazing

that those men of the *Constitution's* crew should have had so keen a sense of the necessary discipline on board such a ship that even in the excitement of the moment, they could restrain their feelings sufficiently to wait for permission to express them. If they had burst out into a spontaneous roar of approval, which was undoubtedly their sentiment, I cannot believe that Lieutenant Read would have frowned upon their exuberance. I'm sure he felt like cheering himself. It is only a trivial incident; yet by it we may judge the perfection of the regularity and order that maintained aboard 'Old Ironsides,' to which we may rightly attribute a large measure of her success in the severe trial she was soon to meet.

"Captain Hull had been ordered to join Commodore Rogers's squadron as soon as the *Constitution* was ready and, with Charles Morris as second in command, he set to work to fit her out with all speed.

"As I said before, it would have been much more sensible for Congress to wait before declaring war until at least all of our largest frigates were ready. They didn't, as we know, and Captain Hull had to hustle the work on the *Constitution* to make up for their short-sightedness. She went first to Annapolis, that port being a convenient one to take on men and stores. A considerable part of the crew were fresh drafts and the moment they stepped on board their training began. Neither the Captain nor his senior lieutenant had any intention of being caught as the *Chesapeake* had been, although the present circumstances were very different in that we had definitely committed ourselves to a conflict with 'The Mistress of the Seas.' So the crews were drilled constantly; new men coming on board were placed with older hands; and,

day in, day out, they labored to perfect their seamanship and gunnery. It was a busy ship, I can tell you, up to the 12th of July when her captain thought she was sufficiently well equipped to take her out to fight. Not that the training stopped. It went on just the same, whether in port or on the sea.

“There must have been an eager and excited company aboard the *Constitution* as she sailed between Cape Henry and Cape Charles into the wide ocean looking for an English vessel with which to try conclusions. After long years the time had arrived when the crew could defy the arrogant British officers who had treated them as little better than slaves on the warships of a country they disliked and mistrusted. On the quarter-deck, the officers must have been as keen to meet the men who had sneered at their ships, their flag and their courage. The day for which they had been longing had come, and, insignificant as our Navy was, the men in its service sailed forth undismayed by the tremendous odds against them. Captain Hull knew nothing of the encounter between the *President* and the *Belvidera*. He thought it most unlikely that the British fleet on our Atlantic coast was aware, as yet, that war had been declared. To be sure that did not concern him greatly. He meant to do a bit of declaring on his own account, if good fortune should put him in the path of an English man-of-war. To effect such a meeting was the fervent hope of the entire ship’s company and that hope was amply fulfilled.

“Passing out through the Capes, they were soon beyond sight of land, headed north, searching for Commodore Rogers’s squadron to which they had been ordered, and about two o’clock in the afternoon the lookout shouted ‘Sail ho!’.

"At the call I feel sure there was a rush to the bulwarks and there, sure enough, were the upper sails of a vessel showing above the horizon. Not long after, three other vessels were visible; and their appearance so close together put a very different complexion on the matter. Anxious as all were to fight, odds of four to one were a bit heavy.

"What ships are they?" was the question in the mind of every man aboard the *Constitution*, but there was no way of telling for certain at that distance. Indeed Captain Hull headed toward them, convinced that he had caught up with Commodore Rogers's squadron. At five o'clock, coming from the northeast before a light breeze, a fifth sail was sighted, and set everyone to further speculation. This newcomer did not seem to have any connection with the four first seen and the officers of the *Constitution* were somewhat puzzled to determine what she might be. Captain Hull shaped his course to investigate her; but the wind died away so that all the vessels were becalmed and lay scarcely moving, watching each other.

"It was a curious and not altogether satisfactory situation. There were six war vessels in sight of one another. It was natural to suppose that the four which were obviously together knew each other's identities. Hull, satisfied that the English were not aware of our declaration of war, could find no excuse for the British to be sailing in such formation. This was the chief reason why he was so sure this must be an American squadron. The puzzle was to whom the fifth vessel, plainly a frigate, belonged. If she were English, he meant to have a try at taking her; and at half past seven that evening he cleared his ship for action. Beginning then to grow a bit uncertain as to the nationality of all those silent

sails, Captain Hull at half past ten set a private signal in the rigging and looked for an answer to it. If indeed it was the squadron he thought it, there should be a reply to banish his doubts. No attention was paid to the lights by any of the mysterious strangers, and Captain Hull decided that it was the part of wisdom to head away. If all five ships were English the *Constitution* would be in a very tight hole indeed.

“Still there was no breeze to speak of, and throughout the night the six vessels lay watching each other. About four o’clock on the morning of the 18th the *Constitution* and that fifth vessel had drifted within gunshot of each other. Suddenly the nearby stranger sent up a rocket and fired two guns. Plainly here was another signal which indicated that there was uncertainty in the minds of the officers who had made it. Those on the *Constitution* waited to see what it would bring forth. It had no meaning for them, so they concluded, rightly, that one at least of those ships was English. They expected to see an answering signal from others of the four which would put their identity beyond doubt. Nothing happened. The little squadron lying dim and shadowy in the gray light of the early dawn was as indifferent to this new signal as they had been to the one Captain Hull had displayed. This mysterious silence was not easy to explain, and it was evident that the lone vessel near the *Constitution* was as puzzled as were those aboard our ship. At any rate she drew off, evidently not liking the company she was keeping. The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this move was that here was an English ship which had fallen in with an American squadron and wanted to get away. Captain Hull, however, in spite of this manœuvre decided, as no answer had been given to his signals, that he had happened upon a

British squadron; and he was now equally anxious to leave that immediate vicinity.

“The situation of the ships assembled there that night in 1812 gives one an idea of how far we have advanced in means of communication since then. In this day the officers of friendly vessels would have been talking together by wireless before they had even sighted each other. It was vastly different with Captain Hull and the sailors of his generation. Ships upon the high seas were most reluctant to give any information about themselves unless they were convinced of the amicable disposition of those who asked it. Cruisers did not hesitate to display the flag of a country with which they might be at war if for any reason they wished to deceive. So those aboard the *Constitution* spent an anxious night guessing at what might be expected on the morrow, and daylight found them surrounded by enemies. Three ships were on the starboard quarter; three were astern, and to these was added a fourth, which appeared about five o’clock. All flew the British flag and they were headed for the *Constitution* with the plainly read intention of capturing her.

“A very formidable array they made. When the *Belvidera* gave the news of war at Halifax the British Commodore lost no time in putting to sea with his squadron looking for Commodore Rogers, and here they now were on the heels of the *Constitution* with every prospect of seizing her. The largest of these ships was the *Africa*, a 64-gun vessel more than a match for ‘Old Ironsides’ all by herself. The uncertain stranger which had sent a signal early in the morning, was the *Guerrière*, a frigate of 38-guns, who now found herself among friends. The *Shannon* and *Belvidera* were also

38s, and in addition there was the *Aeolus*, a 32. The sixth sail was the American brig *Nautilus*, which had been Lieutenant Somers's command off Tripoli, you remember. She had just been captured by the English, and with her was a schooner which was also a prize. Not to mention the enormous difference in weight of armament, the odds were seven to one in ships alone against the American frigate.

"Aboard the *Constitution* there was not the least doubt in anyone's mind about what to do. They must get away from there. It was absurd even to consider fighting; and yet escape seemed hopeless. What little wind there was favored the British ships which, with every stitch of canvas set, drew up gradually on the becalmed American. Neither skill nor daring will make the wind blow, and without it what could that brave company on the *Constitution* do? Well, they could fight to the last ditch if necessary, useless as that would be. At least they hadn't been taken yet. The British vessels were not within gun-range, and Captain Hull made ready to receive them if they came any closer. He brought up to the spar-deck from below a heavy 24-pounder, and from the forecastle a long 18. Then, cutting away the taff-rail, he mounted these guns on the quarter-deck over the stern. He also ran two 24-pounders through the windows of the cabin. These proved later to be of little value on account of the build of the ship. To lighten the *Constitution*, he pumped out 2300 gallons of fresh water; and he wet down his upper canvas, hoping, by closing the pores of the material, to make use of every breath of wind that touched them. Needless to say every sail that would draw was set, and she must have showed a cloud of gleaming white in the early morning mists. The sailors were at their stations in the rig-

ging ready to take instant advantage of even the slightest shift of wind. We can be quite certain that Captain Hull left nothing to chance. It is not difficult to realize the anxiety of those aboard the *Constitution* at dawn of that fateful morning of July 18th, 1812. Escape from the overwhelming squadron of enemy ships bent upon her capture seemed impossible for the frigate. Nothing short of a miracle could save her, and every soul aboard was bitterly aware of how severe a blow her loss would be to our little Navy. It is a glorious thing to know that, in spite of the odds against them, in spite of the ill fortune that had placed the ship in so dire a situation, in spite of the seeming certainty of a disastrous outcome, no one, from the captain down to the youthful midshipmen and impish powder boys, was dismayed. It is harder sometimes to fight against circumstances than against an active human enemy. We could forgive discouragement on the part of the *Constitution's* men, forced to struggle with conditions over which they had not the slightest control. Whistle as they undoubtedly did for a breeze it did not come, yet apparently this hardy crew on the old ship were not discouraged. So long as they could keep out of range of the guns of the British frigates they were not without hope of escaping them when sooner or later a breeze sprang up. With a wind they trusted their vessel to show her heels to any and all of her pursuers, now that Nathaniel Haraden had put her in shape to sail her best. What they most feared was a chance shot which might cripple her rigging and leave them helpless. They looked astern anxiously. Undoubtedly one of the English vessels was drawing nearer. It appeared to be catching slight puffs of air that did not reach the *Constitution*. What to do?

“Captain Hull knew what to try. He ordered out all the small boats, collected every foot of rope that would stand the strain and spliced nearly a mile of it. At least they could tow the ship through the calm waters, and the crews in the cutters went at it with a will, heartbreaking and backbreaking labor though it was.

“It was about six o’clock in the morning by this time and the *Shannon*, the leading British vessel, opened fire with her bow-chasers. The *Constitution* answered with the newly mounted stern guns, and for some ten minutes there was an exchange of shots with no resulting damage on either side. Meanwhile the steady towing was taking our frigate out of range. At eight o’clock the *Shannon* furled her sails, and, with a collection of small boats from the entire squadron, copied the tactics of our ship and began to tow. Without doubt she gained.

“It was then that Lieutenant Morris had his inspiration:

“‘We might try trying kedging, sir,’ he suggested to Captain Hull, who shook his head doubtfully.

“‘Too much water, I’m afraid, Mr. Morris. I should say there must be forty fathoms under us. Better find out for certain, though.’

“There were only twenty-six fathoms, not too much for what they had in mind, and they set to work fastening a special anchor at the head of the long rope. The idea was to carry it out ahead of the ship, drop it, and haul in the hawser by the capstan. It was a better method than towing and saved the backs of the tired crew. Moreover it sent the *Constitution* through the water at a speed that astonished the British. Shortly, however, they discovered what they called the ‘Yankee trick’, and copied it with improvements. Instead of

an anchor at one end of the rope, they used two, one at each end. As the capstan drew on the kedge fastened to the bottom the other was paid out and carried forward by a cutter to be dropped when the first was hauled in. In this way a continuous motion was kept on the ship, instead of having a stop while the single anchor was rowed ahead.

“This device was put into operation aboard the *Belvidera* and she began to draw ahead of the other British vessels. Luckily she was too far behind to threaten the American frigate seriously, but there was never a moment throughout that long day of July 18th that the men dared relax their constant labor. Hour after hour they toiled on, far into the night. Officers and men alike did not spare themselves. Every man and boy aboard had only one desire, for which they gave every ounce of their strength. ‘Save the ship!’ was the sole thought animating these American sailors who, without rest, stood beside their loaded guns, manned their stations in the rigging, and took their turns at rowing or keeping the heavy capstan everlastingly turning.

“Although scarcely two accounts of this struggle agree as to details, there is an almost hourly record of what went on. There was one most anxious period when the *Shannon*, towed by fifteen or sixteen boats assembled from various ships, crept up closer and closer. Apparently there was no escape from this determined Britisher, and the men went to their guns as ready to battle for the old ship as they were to toil at literally hauling her through the water by hand. Through the ports cut in the taffrail they watched the approaching frigate with its cluster of small boats in advance, and waited. There would come a point beyond which the *Shannon* dared not continue her towing. The small cutters

ahead were fine targets for gunners who had practised on casks floating in Chesapeake Bay. What still worried those on board the *Constitution* was the chance that a lucky shot from the enemy might bring down a mast and, although they prepared to fight until the last, their efforts to escape never ceased.

“And just then, as the *Shannon* was almost near enough to open fire, there came a strong puff of wind which stirred the loosely hanging sails. It almost seemed as if the weather, playing cat and mouse with these stately ships, had decided that it was the turn of the *Constitution* for its fitful favors. As you might expect from those alert men aboard her, they took instant advantage of this wayward puff. Sails were trimmed to catch the last ounce of power and ‘Old Ironsides’ spurted ahead out of danger—at least for the time being. To be sure it was only a temporary respite. Again she was becalmed, and once more the kedges must be carried out, the bars of the capstan manned, the slow forward progress maintained, although the men ached in every muscle of their tired bodies.

“During that night the crew snatched a bit of rest lying on deck beside their guns. A light breeze had sprung up and, although at midnight it fell calm again, Captain Hull let his men sleep if they could, knowing well that he would need all their energy on the morrow. What a day of anxiety and incredible toil they had endured! And yet no man had murmured a word of discontent. ‘Save the ship!’ There was no room for other thoughts in the minds of those American sailors.

“Daylight on the morning of the 19th found the situation of ‘Old Ironsides’ decidedly precarious. Four British frigates

were almost within gun range in various positions. Several others, still further off, were making every effort to come up. The air was crystal clear and the sea as smooth as glass. There was wind enough to fill the sails of eleven stately craft, each rigged with every stitch of canvas that would draw. What a sight it must have been! But those who watched had little interest in the beauty of the scene. There was still a grim game going on and every nerve was strained to the utmost.

“For a time the ships all held to the same course. At length the *Guerrière*, which had been on the *Constitution*’s lee bow, drew somewhat ahead and tacked, with the intention of coming within range as the lines upon which the two vessels were sailing converged. Captain Hull dared not risk an encounter in the circumstances, although he would have welcomed a contest with a single ship. He, too, was forced to change his course, and this brought his vessel in the direction of the *Aeolus*, sailing on his port quarter. He drew within range, expecting that she would fire upon him. For some reason, never explained, the *Aeolus* let her guns remain silent; and the *Constitution* went on, still unscathed.

“Meanwhile, during the whole afternoon, the *Shannon* had been gaining in the light airs; and again the gunners on the *Constitution* went to their stern cannon to defend the old ship. Once more the wind freshened and so briskly did it blow this time that the *Constitution* went bowling along at twelve knots an hour. It was a welcome respite for the men aboard her. If the wind would only keep up like that they were confident the *Constitution* could leave the British squadron behind. They trimmed her as they would a yacht in a race, going cheerfully about their tasks, seeing a triumph-

ant end to their endeavors. Not a moment was lost. The small boats which were out had been picked up and swung from davits, or purchases made ready for just such an occasion. Thus they were lifted out of the water so that they were not a drag upon the progress of the ship. The British cut away their boats and later on had considerable difficulty in finding them again.

“It was during the morning of this day that an American merchantman was sighted. One of the English ships raised our flag, hoping to fool this stranger and so capture a rich prize. Captain Hull, seeing the trick, played one himself. Lowering the Stars and Stripes, he raised the British ensign and the merchantman, understanding, drew off and escaped.

“Although in the afternoon of the 19th there was a good breeze, it was sending the English ships along as well as the *Constitution*. She more than held her own, but there was no certainty that another period of calm would not settle down upon the summer sea. Not for a moment was their vigil relaxed. The tired men stood at their stations, ready to answer smartly any order that might come from their sturdy captain on the quarter-deck. And rest assured there were plenty of these given. Captain Hull knew how to get the very last bit of speed out of his ship, and he meant to do it. The race was still on. The *Shannon*, the *Belvidera* and the *Guerrière* continued to constitute a decided menace. The men aboard them were as determined as were our own sailors. Nor were they stupid. Our tactics were being met and matched. The game was played to the limit on both sides.

“About six o’clock in the afternoon Captain Hull, looking to windward, saw a heavy squall of wind and rain approaching. In this he thought to find an opportunity to

fool the many eyes watching his every movement from the British vessels in his wake. To this end he sent his sailors to their stations with an admonition to execute his orders with the utmost smartness. Then for a time he waited, watching the darkening surface of the water as the squall approached. He meant to hold the clouds of canvas on their frail spars to the last instant, trusting to the skill of his trained seamen to save them from being blown away. And, at the right moment, he shouted his orders above the roar of the wind and rain. In a twinkling the light canvas was furled, reefs taken where they were needed and the ship brought under shortened sail, without the loss of a yard of it. Nevertheless, as was intended by the Captain, she had heeled to the first impact, there had been an appearance of confusion and a hint of flying sails. The English, watching to gauge the strength of the squall, guessed from what they saw on the *Constitution* that it was severe, and hastened to anticipate its coming. Forgetting their chase, they separated, hauled up their lower canvas, and took in their light sails aloft. Thus they slowed up before the wind hit them.

“Meanwhile Captain Hull, knowing that for a time at least he was hidden from his enemies by the rain, had felt the weight of the wind and reset every sail that the *Constitution* could reasonably carry. That fine bit of seamanship ended the race. When the sky cleared the British vessels were still in sight but they had lost miles in that brief, squally hour. Still Captain Hull took no chances. All that night he and his officers were on deck with the crew. Daylight found them still vigilant and ready to meet any emergency. The sails of the enemy’s squadron were just showing above the horizon, and the *Belvidera*, the last to give up

the chase, altered her course to the northeast. They had saved their ship, those sturdy American sailors, and after sixty hours of unremitting toil they were sent below for a well-earned rest.

## CHAPTER XVIII

“THE escape of the *Constitution* from the British squadron was a glorious affair. It was the admiration of the English officers, who did not hesitate to express unqualified praise of the masterly way in which the ship had been handled during the long hours of that stern chase. I like to remember that they said nice things about Captain Hull and his men. It is a fact to be emphasized that, during the heat of actual battles and in the hour of surrender with its sense of humiliation for the vanquished, there was, in most instances, a fine exchange of courtesies between the officers of the two navies. There was no attempt to belittle the gallant efforts of a foe who had lost, no undue exultation on the part of those who won. The men who did the fighting in those days felt no necessity to hate their opponents. Sentiments of that sort were indulged in by civilians safe ashore; the man whose profession it was to risk his life did not think it necessary to withhold his respect for a brave and resourceful enemy. There are various incidents to prove this which we shall note as we come to them. They are bits of sunshine in this rather gloomy business of war.

“To get back to the old ship, the praise of the English officers had been earned. In spite of a stubborn pursuit, in which all the resources of the squadron had been utilized, the *Constitution* had escaped through the skill and fortitude of her men. Undaunted, they had fought a great battle against adverse circumstances. Without considerations of rank, all had worked at the immediate task at hand and

by their united efforts had saved their vessel. And the *Constitution* herself, as if she knew what was in store for her, had sailed as never before. She was no longer the sluggish, clumsy craft which had labored in the storms of that voyage to Europe and back. Grateful for the efforts of Captain Hull and Nathaniel Haraden, she responded to the lightening of her load. Thereafter the men who handled her had only words of praise for her sailing qualities.

“Once free of the British squadron, Captain Hull decided to make a port in order to refill his water tanks and take on necessary supplies. New York was blockaded, so he headed for Boston where word of the *Constitution*’s fortunes at sea was anxiously awaited. She had been away for twenty-two days, and rumors of a disaster had been freely circulated. The opposing politicians, to bring discredit upon the existing government, did not hesitate to circulate tales they knew to be false. They said that the ship had gone to sea without powder and in no better condition than was the *Chesapeake* on her ill-fated start for the Mediterranean. It was positively asserted that the *Constitution* had been captured; and the gloomy New Englanders who did not favor the war, were quite ready to believe the worst.

“Then, one bright day, our famous old frigate sailed in and anchored just outside Boston harbor. The news of her escape and the manner of it were soon common property; and the whole town cheered up. They took a personal pride in the *Constitution* because she had been built there; and after believing that they would never see her again, except perhaps under an English flag, the joy at her return was excessive.

“Apparently the people of the city were inclined to give

all the credit of the exploit to Captain Hull, for he went to some trouble to correct that impression. In the books of the Exchange Coffee House he wrote a short review of his opinion for all to read. He began by saying that his friends were disposed to give him all the praise for the escape, which was unfair. He wished it understood that a great part of the commendation was due Lieutenant Morris, the other officers, and the crew under his command. He made it plain that everybody on the ship was brave, obedient and tireless in their unremitting efforts, that although there had been little time to eat and all were at work constantly, with scarcely any sleep for sixty long hours, there was never even the murmur of a complaint.

“That’s the sort of chap Hull was. He hadn’t forgotten the way his men and officers had stood up to their labors, running to do his bidding in spite of intense fatigue. He saw to it that they should receive a full measure of credit, and you may be sure this spirit helped to win the regard of all under him. It is a fact that his men were devoted to him.

“There is another element in this experience that it is well to consider. The men who had set out on the *Constitution* were untried in making war. It is fair to assume that in the beginnings of this contest with the ‘Mistress of the Seas’ there might be a lack of assurance among those who had expressed the most confidence in their ability to hold their own. This escape, therefore, although not proof that Americans could fight as well as Englishmen, was a demonstration of the fact that in seamanship, at least, our sailors were as resourceful as their British cousins.

“Captain Hull’s first duty was to report his arrival in

Boston to the Navy Department and ask for orders from Commodore Rogers, which he thought might be waiting for him in New York. No instructions had been left there, and Hull put to sea again on the second of August. He was not inclined to loaf about in Boston. There were several reasons which warned him against delay. It took no prophet to foretell that the British could seal up the harbor, making it impossible for him to get out. A battle-ship and a frigate or two would be able to accomplish this, and although for a time, because of their hope of alienating the New England States, the British left the port open, there was always the possibility that they would close it. There was, too, the danger that President Madison and his Cabinet might change their minds once more and order all the ships in the Navy to remain at home out of harm's way. There must have been a certain amount of distrust of orders that originated in Washington, and Captain Hull felt easier in his mind with a few miles of tumbling ocean between him and the government strategists. There was no wireless in those days by which a civilian Secretary could tell a trained naval officer how to do his work. Captain Hull put to sea as promptly as he could, following the only orders he had, which were to join Commodore Rogers's squadron.

"And very lucky it was for him and the country. As it happened, the Secretary of the Navy had decided to give the *Constitution* to Captain Bainbridge, who was Hull's senior. The letter containing this news arrived just a day late. It is possible that the Secretary was annoyed and perhaps made ready to censure the young captain for being in such a hurry to escape the jurisdiction of his superiors. When, however,

the *Constitution* returned to shore, her captain was the very last person in the country to be made the subject of official criticism.

“Having succeeded in getting to sea without being interfered with, Captain Hull breathed a sigh of relief and set about his business of making as much trouble for the English as he could. Keeping a weather eye open for the British squadron, he sailed the *Constitution* eastward, hoping to fall in with a detached enemy ship bound for Halifax. He went as far as the Gulf of St. Lawrence without any luck, except to pick up two merchantmen, which he burned. Off Cape Race he sighted four more of these trading vessels under convoy of a British sloop-of-war, and went after them. Seeing the *Constitution* bearing down, the enemy destroyed one of the vessels and signaled the others to separate. Overhauling the largest, Captain Hull stopped her and discovered that she was already the prize of an American privateer. She was told to go her way while the *Constitution* went after a brig. This proved to be an American vessel which had been captured by the British and manned with a prize crew. These the Captain took prisoner, sending the brig in to port.

“It was this sort of thing that the warships of the two navies were doing constantly. It is the battles they fought which we remember; it was, however, just as much their duty to harass the enemy trading ships as it was to fight. Moreover it was profitable to capture these merchantmen. They were sold, and prize-money was distributed to the officers and men of the ships which took them. It was a part of their compensation, and had a considerable influence in persuading men to enlist in the service.

"It must always be kept in mind that during these days the training of the crew on board the *Constitution* was never relaxed. Nor do I think the constant drilling was resented by the majority of our seamen and gunners. They were as keen to fit themselves to beat the British as were their officers. Also they were intelligent enough to know that this war was being fought to maintain the rights of American sailors on the high seas. Their rights. It was a realization of this fact that reconciled them to the incessant practice and to the strict and irksome discipline. No doubt there was grumbling among the few, which made no difference in the continuance of the routine, although it may, now and then, have brought a few whacks on the backs of complaining individuals. The discontented among the crew were too greatly in the minority to be seriously noted, and the results show that the men must have been diligent in their training.

"On August 16th, the *Constitution* turned south, and at eleven o'clock the next night came upon a vessel seen dimly in the thick haze. They ran close to her and Captain Hull hailed.

"'What brig is that?'

"'The *John of St. Johns*.'

"'Where bound?'

"'Halifax.'

"'Come under our lee.' And Captain Hull ordered Lieutenant Morris to go down to her.

"To those aboard the *Constitution* this shouted conversation through the foggy night, meant that they had picked up another English merchantman, and doubtless they speculated upon her worth while the two vessels lay-to. Lieutenant Morris when he went over the brig's side heard a

word or two which gave him a hint of what he was to find.

“‘It’s the *Constitution*,’ said a boy’s voice near by.

“‘Nonsense!’ was the rough reply, and the boy gave the reason for his conviction.

“‘Don’t you see the eagle buttons on his coat?’

“Instead of being British, the brig was the *Decatur*, a privateer out of Salem.

“‘I thought you were the British frigate *Guerrière*,’ its captain said in explanation of the answers he had given. ‘I was so sure of it that I threw overboard all my guns and cutlasses.’

“This last bit of information had little interest for Lieutenant Morris.

“‘What do you know of the *Guerrière*? ’ he demanded excitedly.

“‘I sighted her yesterday in latitude—’

“Lieutenant Morris cut him short.

“‘Come aboard the *Constitution* and tell the captain. He’ll be glad to see you.’

“So glad was Captain Hull to get news of the British frigate that he gave the captain of the *Decatur* a fresh supply of cutlasses and a few guns in exchange for his information. Then he shaped his course for the place where the *Guerrière* had last been seen by the men of the privateer. He hoped, fervently, that he should find her. This catching harmless merchantmen was all very well and quite in the line of his duty, though hardly the whole duty of a well equipped war vessel ready for action against a worthy enemy.

“Captain Hull wanted to fight his ship. He was anxious to prove, what he thoroughly believed, that it was a mistake

to fancy the English unbeatable. Moreover he was an officer of the United States Navy, and proud of it. So were his men proud; all of them desired to show the world that Yankee sailors and Yankee ships were not a joke to be laughed at by the supercilious officers of His Majesty's service.

“And, in particular, Captain Hull was anxious to meet the British frigate *Guerrière*. He knew her commander, Captain Dacres, and liked him. They had met and talked together at an inn in Lynnhaven. Each had boasted a little of his ship and, in quite a friendly way, Dacres had proposed an extravagant bet that, should events ever bring about a meeting, the *Guerrière* would score a victory over the *Constitution*. Hull had replied that he could not afford to place so high a price upon his opinion, yet he had great faith in his ship and would wager a new gold-laced hat that the *Constitution* was the better frigate. To that they agreed, parting amicably with hearty wishes that good fortune might give them the opportunity to test their faith in the ships they commanded.

“With this incident in mind, it is easy to understand that no antagonist would be more welcome to Captain Hull than Captain Dacres. He steered his ship, still farther to the southward, and, on the afternoon of August 19th, the lookout shouted down to the deck that he had discovered a sail. Only her upper canvas was showing and no one could tell who or what she was. Nevertheless I think they must have been hoping she was a frigate, and perhaps the particular frigate they sought; for there is evidence of unusual excitement aboard the *Constitution* as they watched the stranger come slowly up over the curve of the wide ocean.

“Captain Hull on the quarter-deck sent a midshipman aloft with a glass. He reported that she seemed a mighty craft with a tremendous spread of sail. The Captain nodded his head as if pleased and turned to the sailing-master beside him.

“‘After her with all speed, Mr. Alwyn,’ he ordered; and in a jiffy every stitch of canvas the *Constitution* could carry was set, and away they went to obtain a closer view of this interesting stranger.

“The weather, which plays a considerable part in battles at sea, was somewhat thick and hazy, with a heavy sea running. A good breeze was blowing; and the *Constitution*, speeding before it, seemed as eager as the men on her decks to lessen the intervening miles of turbulent water which separated her from the rival vessel. In an hour or so she was definitely identified as a frigate under a fair spread of canvas and apparently in no hurry. The hope on our ship rose higher. It was reasonably certain that she was English, and she showed no inclination to avoid a meeting. Within the next hour all doubt was set at rest. She was seen to be the *Guerrière*, with her topsails set a-back, ready and waiting for the conflict.

“And this obvious readiness was quite in keeping with the English tradition. Captain Dacres aboard the *Guerrière* was as anxious as Captain Hull, looking for a chance to demonstrate once again the invincibility of British ships and British sailors. He had not the least fear of the outcome, and, if the *Constitution* was somewhat larger than his ship, he was perfectly content to let the odds lie with his antagonist. The oak sides of the *Guerrière* were more than a match for any ‘fir-built’ American frigate. Her pine plank-

ing would offer little resistance to the 18-pound shot he would send into her. Captain Dacres waited full of confidence, watching the American approach, and when the time came sent his men to their quarters without the slightest misgivings as to the outcome of a contest with these rash Yankees who were hastening to their doom.

“Convinced that the *Guerrière* was waiting for him, Captain Hull ceased hurrying and, with the utmost coolness and deliberation, set about preparing his ship. Aloft the sails had to be made ready. Only enough canvas was spread to work her. The lower sails, ‘courses’ as they were called, were hauled up, and slings rigged to the wide yards. Staysails were taken in, topgallants furled and topsails reefed. She went into the fight with only these reefed topsails, a jib and the spanker drawing, although the topgallants were ready to be set at a moment’s notice.

“On the deck the preparations were thorough and somewhat grim. The ports were triced up; tompions were removed from their muzzles and all tackle with which cannon were handled was tested to see that it was in working order. Pumps were rigged to guard against fire and leakage from shot holes. Tubs of water were placed at convenient places and the decks wet down from stem to stern. Sand was scattered over all to make the footing secure, and the shot was piled within easy reach.

“I do not think it was necessary to repeat any orders to that crew. Eagerness to come to grips with the English was not confined to the quarter-deck. The enlisted men were every whit as ready as their officers. The opportunity they had waited for was there at last. It was for this that they had practised shooting at casks floating on the water. Day

after day they had hauled the heavy guns in and out of the ports, sponged them, rammed home a charge of powder and followed it with ball. Then would come the aiming across the sight bars, a word from the captain of the gun, the roar of the explosion and the instant of immobility as the little group watched for the splash two, or at the most, three miles off in the tumbling ocean. A cheer if they hit, a growl if they missed; and once more the same thing to do again and yet again.

"Now they were about to learn if all this training were worth while. The 'Mistress of the Seas' had scorned such preparations. The men upon the vessel they were approaching had laughed at them, ridiculing Yankee ships, Yankee officers, Yankee crews and Yankee notions. Was it possible that the English were right? The American sailors didn't think so; and the time had come for the test.

"At five o'clock in the afternoon the *Guerrière*, still some two miles away, set her colors. The white ensign of His Majesty's Navy fluttered in the wind, displaying the Cross of St. George, the proud emblem of a proud race. During twenty years past this Royal Navy had fought the ships of France, Italy, Turkey, Algeria, Russia and Holland. In some two hundred single conflicts she had lost only five vessels. No wonder her officers were arrogant! No wonder Captain Dacres watched the approach of the *Constitution* with a confident smile upon his lips. To the long list of English victories upon the seas, he was certain that shortly he would have added the name of a ship belonging to the new American Republic which the whole world had come to view with contempt.

"I sometimes wonder what Captain Hull was thinking

when he saw the British flag. He knew the record of the navy of which it was the emblem. He might well have had a momentary doubt of the outcome of this battle which was about to begin. He was quite aware that the men on the *Guerrière* had no fear of the result; nor did he discount the advantages of assurance. There would be no faltering by his opponent. The officers and crew aboard that British frigate were brave and ready.

“Behind Captain Hull was no such record of accomplishment. The ship he sailed had scarcely been tested, and was acknowledged something of an experiment in the designing of frigates. His officers and crew were, for the most part, wholly inexperienced in what was to come. He himself had fought only against the pirates of Tripoli.

“And yet he was not dismayed. He too, smiled, I’m sure; not arrogantly or with undue confidence; but rather joyously. At length an opportunity had arrived when he and his men could prove to a sneering world, and to Englishmen in particular, that Americans were not cowards, though they might be young and disinclined to fight; that they were not fools, though they chose their own paths to reach a goal as yet only dimly glimpsed. Some such thought must have passed through Captain Hull’s mind when, in answer to the British challenge, he ordered the Stars and Stripes displayed. Then, for an instant, he looked across the tumbling waters before he squared his shoulders and called his men to quarters.

“At the beat of the summoning drum every man on the *Constitution* ran to his station, and it is said they cheered. I have no doubt they did, for the fateful moment had come. As in a football game, the referee had blown his whistle

and the men were lined up face to face, anxious for that first feel of their opponents' strength. The marines with their muskets sprang to the shrouds and mounted to the fighting-tops. On the spar-deck gunners clustered around their carronades, each with an eye to the condition of the tools he was to handle. The powder boys leaped to the distributing points, unable to stand still in the excitement they felt over what was to come. Captain Hull, with Lieutenant Morris and the sailing-master, Mr. Alwyn, at his elbow, stood quietly on the quarter-deck looking forward as the *Constitution* came gradually within range of the cannons on the *Guerrière*. Behind them a group of midshipmen waited to carry orders to any part of the ship.

“On the deck below, the gunners, at their posts around the 24-pounders, were ready for the heavy work at hand. Here it was only half light, a little gloomy indeed, with the pale rays of a setting sun casting fitful gleams through the open ports. The lieutenants, as tense as the men they commanded, walked up and down between the guns, critically eyeing the state of preparedness and snapping out short orders when necessary. In the cockpit, still further down, Mr. Evans, the surgeon, was directing his mates and making ready for the patients who were sure to come. And finally, far below the water-line, were the men who handled the powder. They sent it up in little bags through trap-doors set in each deck to guard against a stray spark finding its way to the magazines. From keel to fighting tops the men on the *Constitution* waited, eager for the command that would start them at their deadly tasks.

“Slowly the two ships drew together. On the main deck the men, braced to the roll of the ship, peered through the

ports to catch a glimpse of their target. There was little talk. A murmur now and then from a lieutenant and a gruff, 'We'll show 'em, sir,' in answer. On the spar-deck Captain Hull spoke to the gunners.

"Watch your aim, boys. Don't fire at random."

"Leave it to us, sir," came the grim reply. I'm sure the Captain must have felt that he could leave a great deal to them.

"Shortly after five o'clock the first guns of the battle were let off. The *Guerrière* fired a broadside, which fell short. Immediately she turned and discharged another. Two balls hit the *Constitution*, doing no damage. The *Constitution* replied with her bow guns by way of a salute, not expecting any results. For three-quarters of an hour this rather desultory exchange continued while the two captains jockeyed for position, each hoping, the while, that a stray shot might cripple his opponent's rigging.

"This sort of thing did not suit Captain Hull, and at length he set more sail and made directly for the *Guerrière*. For a time the two vessels were headed in the same direction, the *Constitution* drawing up gradually to windward of the British ship. As they approached, the shots from the enemy began to tell. A man was killed beside the long gun in the bow. A shot struck the mainmast and shattered one of the hoops. As the distance continued to decrease, the fire from the *Guerrière* grew more intense while, except for a shot now and then from the bow guns, the *Constitution* made no reply. Her broadsides could not bear upon the target, and Captain Hull had no intention of firing until he was entirely ready. So, amid an increasing roar of cannonading from the *Guerrière* and the crashing of splintering wood

as a shot struck, our men stood to their guns inactive. On the main deck, looking eagerly through the ports for a glimpse of the enemy, the crews waited. On the spar-deck, the men glanced over their shoulders at the stout figure of their captain, who spoke now and then to the sailing-master or directly to the helmsmen. Would he never give the order to fire? He must have known the fine mettle of his men to put their courage to such a test. Of the entire battle, that period of waiting was the hardest to endure.

"About six o'clock the *Constitution* drew abreast of the *Guerrière* at short range. Slowly her bow came level with the beam of the English ship, which was firing broadside after broadside as fast as the guns could be loaded. Lieutenant Morris in a fever of excitement spoke to the Captain.

"'Shall we fire, sir?'

"'Not yet,' answered Hull, and for a moment more he waited, while the shots from the *Guerrière* tore through the rigging or thumped against the stout sides of the *Constitution*. It must have seemed hours to the men, but they did not flinch. Then, when in his unruffled judgment, Captain Hull believed the time had come, he shouted his command in so loud a voice that it was heard above the roar of the enemy's guns.

"'Give it to 'em, boys!' he cried, and in answer the crash of the broadside from the *Constitution* rent the air like a blast of thunder. And amid the din of battle the American sailors raised a cheer in honor of their country and its flag.

"For that moment until the end there was no cessation in the deadly work of destruction. As the *Constitution* slowly passed the *Guerrière* her gunners worked like machines. In

spite of the excitement of the conflict the men tended their cannon as they had been trained. Every shot was aimed, every shot told. In ten minutes after the first broadside the mizzenmast of the *Guerrière* fell, littering her decks with tangled rigging.

“‘Hurrah, boys!’ cried a man on the *Constitution*, ‘we’ve made a brig of her!’

“‘Aye,’ shouted the begrimed captain of a gun crew, ‘and before we’re through we’ll make a sloop of her. At it, lads!’

“If they had lacked a shade of confidence before the battle they were completely sure of themselves now. They knew the strength of the enemy. After all, these British seamen were only men who didn’t shoot as well as they did themselves.

“‘Give it to ‘em, lads!’ they shouted, repeating the captain’s orders; and the fight went on.

“Nor were her men disappointed in their ship. That pine planking which they had heard so ridiculed had not suffered at all. Indeed these English cannon balls could scarcely do more than dent her stout sides; and, as one hit and bounced back into the sea, another exultant shout rose above the din:

“‘Hey, boys, did you see that? Her sides are made of iron!’

“And so in the midst of smoke and flame and the clamorous tumult of an intense action, ‘Old Ironsides’ was rechristened. A fine name for a fine ship!

“The contest was still to be won. There were brave and stout-hearted men aboard the *Guerrière*. The fall of a mast was unfortunate but no sign of defeat. The struggle went on as furiously as before.

“By this time the *Constitution* had drawn past the English ship, and Captain Hull saw an opportunity to cross her bows and rake the *Guerrière* from stem to stern. In attempting this manœuvre the ship, because many of her stays had been shot away, was slow to answer her helm; and the bowsprit of the *Guerrière* fouled the mizzen rigging of the American frigate. For a few moments the two vessels clung together. And still the guns roared. Men loaded heavy cannon and fired them point-blank into each other, almost within touching distance. Below, on the main deck of ‘Old Ironsides,’ the buzz of a rattle sounded above the din.

“‘Fire! Fire!’ Certain men left the guns in answer to this signal.

“‘Aft! The captain’s cabin is in flames!’ There they ran and, under the direction of Lieutenant Hoffman, put out the blaze set going by a bow gun on the *Guerrière*, whose muzzle was pointing almost through the stern windows of the *Constitution*.

“On the quarter-deck, when the bow of the British ship hung in the rigging above their heads, the officers were on the jump. Here was a bridge between the two, and Lieutenant Morris expected the English to board them. So evidently did Captain Hull; for a shrill whistle called the men to repel boarders, and up they tumbled from the waist grabbing pikes and cutlasses as they came. Lieutenant Morris, Lieutenant Bush and Mr. Alwyn leaped into the hammock nettings to peer above the bulwarks. All three of them were struck by bullets from the English marines in the tops of the *Guerrière*. Mr. Bush was killed outright and Mr. Morris barely escaped a similar fate. It was at this time that the greatest number of casualties occurred. For the marksmen

high above the decks, this cluster of sailors gathered below offered too fair a target for many balls to miss.

“And still the guns roared, continuing to pour round after round, although it was noted that the fire from the *Guerrière* was slackening. The tangled spars ground together as the two ships rolled in the heavy sea, and it was soon evident that boarding was impossible for either side. Moreover, Captain Hull saw no need to sacrifice his men in a hand-to-hand engagement. He ordered the *Constitution* swung away and, as the two vessels parted, the foremast of the *Guerrière* crashed down, bringing the mainmast with it. The English frigate was a helpless wreck, wallowing in a restless ocean. A great mass of tumbled canvas and broken rigging hung over her sides so that the ports of her guns were covered. Whatever may have been the spirit of the men upon her decks, the ship herself had ceased to be a menace. For her the end was plainly in sight. Captain Hull, seeing that his enemy could not escape, drew out of range in order to examine the damage done his own ship. There was no need for him to take unnecessary risks. Within range, a stray shot might bring down a mast, and the Captain was ever mindful of the fact that the American Navy had only three heavy frigates. To preserve his own vessel was no small part of his problem and, moreover, he had no assurance that another English warship might not come up over the horizon at any moment. If that should happen he wished to be prepared. He had won his first battle with the ‘Mistress of the Seas.’ Already he was making ready for the next one.

“Upon examination it was found that ‘Old Ironsides’ had earned her name. She sustained no serious injury. Some of

her rigging had been cut; but in a short time it was repaired and the *Constitution* returned to her victim. With the broadsides of his enemy facing his bows Captain Dacres of the *Guerrière* ordered a gun fired to leeward in token of surrender.

“So ended this most memorable engagement. It is scarcely possible to overestimate the important part it played in the development of our Navy or in the fortunes of our country.”

## CHAPTER XIX

“AFTER the *Guerrière* had surrendered, Lieutenant Read was sent aboard to take possession. He found her in a sinking condition and so reported to Captain Hull, who promptly brought his prisoners aboard the *Constitution*.

“The destruction of the British frigate was complete, and the sight that had met Lieutenant Read as he climbed over her side was very shocking. It isn’t necessary to go into details. The men on the *Guerrière* had fought bravely, and that is all that can be said for them. In every phase of the contest they were outclassed, and although the *Constitution* was a larger vessel, this in no way detracts from the fact that in seamanship and gunnery her men were far superior. I’m not saying this to belittle the British officers and men. Not at all. I simply want to emphasize the fact that overconfidence does not win battles and to point out that in this, the first test of the English and American theories, our methods justified themselves. Don’t forget that Lord Nelson had declared that training gunners was a waste of time. Our officers didn’t agree with him, and had now proved the value of shooting at empty casks floating in the water.

“As might be expected, countless stories have come down to us of this action between ‘Old Ironsides’ and the *Guerrière*. Whether they are founded on absolute fact makes little difference. There is a grain of truth in all of them no matter how extravagant, and one or two are worth repeating it for no other reason than to give an idea of how people were thinking in those days. For instance, one amusing tale

has to do with Captain Hull at the moment he gave the order to fire that first broadside:

"It seems that he was a bit of a dandy, taking a good deal of pains with his personal appearance. He saw to it that his uniform fitted him well, and it was the fashion to have it rather tight. No doubt he stood erect and cool during the long period of waiting while he held his fire; but when at last the moment came and he shouted with all the power of his lungs: 'Give it to 'em, boys' he bent over in his excitement and split his trousers from waist to knee. 'However,' remarks the grave historian of this incident, 'Captain Hull did not let this accident deter him in his duties.' In other words he didn't stop to change his breeches in the midst of the battle. It is typical of the American to find something ludicrous in the most tragic surroundings. It is funny to picture this rather dandified captain going through the conflict in tattered trousers, while his officers hid their smiles as they took his orders. Only it couldn't have happened that way. Hull and his officers had no thought at all for how they looked, with the roar of that conflict sounding in their ears. There were too many distressful sights under their eyes for the trivial to distract their attention. Afterward perhaps, in the glow of victory, when the work had been accomplished and they awaited the formalities of surrender, one of his lieutenants may have called the Captain's attention to the state of his apparel. Nor would the young man be at any pains to hide a smile while the hearts of all aboard the *Constitution* were beating fast in the excitement of their success. Not until then, you may be sure, did the modish captain leave the deck to seek equipment more in keeping with the dignity of his position.

“It is told that there was a period of uncertainty between the time the masts of the *Guerrière* fell and the definite signal of surrender. Certain accounts have it that she struck her flag. Possibly she did, or made other signs to indicate her submission. On the other hand it is reported that the men on the main deck of the *Constitution* were suspicious of their antagonist. They feared some sort of trick; for, although the *Guerrière* was helpless, many of her cannon were still capable of doing great damage. The men below, who had been fighting in the smoke and gloom, were ignorant of what was going on above them. They didn’t want to run any risks and asked their officers for permission to blow up the *Guerrière* there and then.

“‘Let’s sink ‘em!’ was the cry that ran from gun to gun. The permission was not given and the request, if actually made, must have been because the men on the gun-deck did not know what had taken place.

“The story of Lieutenant Read’s talk with Captain Dacres in their first interview after the battle gives a hint of what sort of a chap the Englishman was.

“‘Captain Hull’s compliments, sir,’ began the American, addressing the defeated commander, ‘and he would like to know if you have struck your flag?’

“Captain Dacres, even in that bitter hour, still retained his sense of humor; for he replied dryly as he looked over his ship:

“‘Well, I don’t know. Our mizzen is gone, our mainmast is gone and our foremast is gone. On the whole, you may say that we’ve struck our flag.’

“And then there is that somewhat solemn occasion when, leaving his sinking craft, Captain Dacres went aboard the

*Constitution* to surrender his sword to the man who had beaten him. Captain Hull was there, and in his mind was the recollection of their last meeting ashore.

“With due regard for the etiquette of the occasion the Englishman presented his sword in acknowledgment of his defeat.

“‘No, no, Captain Dacres; keep your sword,’ said Captain Hull magnanimously; ‘but,’ he added with a twinkle in his eye, ‘I should be glad to have that new hat.’

“In curious contrast with their behavior during peace between the two countries, the English officers, when we were at war with them, acted in most instances as gallant foes and fine gentlemen. For many years preceding this contest, they had treated our men with a total disregard for the common decencies which should obtain between the representatives of two independent nations. They went out of their way to ridicule and humiliate us, belittling our efforts and boasting their superiority. Our flag, our ships and our sailors were laughed to scorn; yet when the time came for them to prove these assertions, when hostilities were actually declared, officers of the two navies displayed a most friendly feeling toward each other. These contests between single vessels took on the aspect of duels. Challenges were sent to individual commanders offering guarantees that there should be no interference by other ships of the respective fleets. There is on file just such a challenge from Captain Dacres, which was taken into port by the *John Adams*, a merchantman. In it the Captain describes himself as the ‘commander of his Britannic Majesty’s frigate *Guerrière*, of 44 guns,’ and he presents his compliments to ‘Commodore Rogers of the United States frigate *President*,’ expressing a desire to meet

the *President* or any other vessel of equal force off Sandy Hook for the purpose of having 'a few minutes' *tête-à-tête*.' He was perfectly confident of the outcome and aware that the American-built frigate was somewhat larger than English ships of the same rating. I wonder if he remembered these things when he stood on the deck of the *Constitution* and watched the *Guerrière* disappear forever? It was a bitter moment for Captain Dacres, and he would be pardoned for seeking excuses to explain his defeat. To his great credit he did no such thing. He admitted being severely beaten, and in his official report to the British Admiralty praised Captain Hull and his men for being both brave and considerate.

"The *Guerrière* was blown up on the afternoon following the engagement. Meanwhile all the personal effects of the British officers and men were brought aboard the *Constitution* to be distributed to their owners. A moment before the signal was given for the destruction of the English ship Captain Hull asked the British captain if there was anything else on the *Guerrière* which he would like to save.

"'Yes, there is,' answered Captain Dacres. 'My mother's Bible is still aboard. I have carried it for many years.'

"Needless to say this precious Bible was brought off, and possibly it was this final act of courtesy which cemented a lasting friendship between these officers.

"There are many, many similar incidents which took place during this last war between England and the United States. Among the officers of both navies there was a strong desire to lessen the humiliation of the vanquished, to be humble in the hour of victory, and at all times to act with consideration toward a brave opponent. These sentiments did

not weaken their determination while the battle raged. During the conflict, the sole thought was to damage the enemy without mercy. At the end, however, when the flag was lowered to announce surrender, the victors felt a quick sympathy for the hurt, exhibiting a generous spirit toward those who had been beaten and a willingness to give credit to those who had fought well and stout-heartedly. I like to remember that this fine chivalry existed between the officers of the two navies. Unhappily those safe ashore were not so scrupulous in their treatment of the enemy.

"A further word should be said of Captain Dacres's thoughtfulness. There were aboard the *Guerrière* during the battle some Americans who had been impressed or captured. They told that when the *Constitution* appeared Captain Dacres was surprised that an American frigate should sail so boldly to give battle to an English ship. He is reported to have remarked that the braver the enemy the more credit to the victor. This is a somewhat boastful expression of his feelings, although it indicates exactly his attitude of mind; for it must constantly be remembered that the superiority of the British Navy was acknowledged throughout the world. Otherwise it is not possible to realize the enormous significance of this and subsequent victories won by the Americans. Dacres simply took it for granted that he would win, and to have expressed himself otherwise would have been to display a false modesty. Of course no such thought entered his mind. He was, however, concerned for the sensibilities of the Americans on his ship and, appreciating their reluctance to fight against their countrymen, he sent them all below. Several of them have described their sensations aboard the doomed vessel. They could not see

what was going on; they could only guess, by the quivering of the *Guerrière* and the crashing of masts and rigging, the dreadful destruction which followed the broadsides from the *Constitution*. They described vividly the appalling condition of the dead and injured on the English frigate. The loss of men on 'Old Ironsides' in killed and wounded was fourteen; on the *Guerrière*, seventy-eight. We took two hundred and sixty-seven prisoners.

"To the officers of the United States Navy this battle proved their contention and justified their plea to be allowed to fight for their flag. It had been demonstrated that in gunnery we were far better than the English; that, with all due credit to Captain Dacres, he had been outsailed by his opponent; and that 'Old Ironsides' was a better ship than the *Guerrière*. The training we had given our crews was shown to be well worth the time and expense. Against the Yankees, anyway, Lord Nelson's ideas had need of revision. Of course, as the saying goes, 'one swallow does not make a summer.' Nor does one engagement go far to establishing a precedent. That came later, when the English themselves began to build their ships and train their crews after the Yankee fashion. They did not like us, and they said as much without reserve. They did, however, pay us the compliment of copying our methods.

"After the sinking of the *Guerrière*, the *Constitution* was headed for Boston. And a doleful town it was before 'Old Ironsides' arrived there. This war in which the Navy, you remember, was utterly ignored, had not been going well for us. One defeat after another had befallen the Army, which the politicians had created over night. The entire country was discouraged; and New Englanders in particular were

approaching the depths of despair. The war had been most unpopular in these Eastern States. Trade of all kinds was at a standstill. Rumors of secession were growing more persistent. The pacifists and Federalists were doing everything they could think of to hamper the efforts of the Government, and each failure on land added to the general confusion existing among the incompetents in Washington. The people of Boston said openly that the sooner we made peace with England the better—no matter what the price. They condemned our going into the conflict at all, deeming it an example of almost criminal foolishness, which every report from the battle fields confirmed.

“Such was the gloom and bitter spirit of the people of New England when the *Constitution* sailed into Boston Harbor with the tale of a glorious victory at sea and 267 prisoners on her decks to prove it. Immediately the entire outlook of these New Englanders changed. ‘Old Ironsides’ had been built in Boston, and they promptly claimed her for their own, taking an enormous pride in her exploit. The open talk of England being unbeatable was stilled. The band of British prisoners was concrete evidence that the charm of her invincibility was broken. The people of the city went wild with joy. It was the first bit of good news that had come to them since the conflict had started, and they left nothing undone to show their appreciation to Captain Hull and his men. This victory on the seas, so unexpected by the people at large, was immensely popular; and when the news traveled throughout the country, the scenes of rejoicing that had occurred in Boston were repeated in all the other towns.

“Captain Hull, his officers and men, were entertained with all the enthusiasm you would expect from a down-hearted



EVERY ONE OF THOSE HARDY TARS HAD HIS PARTICULAR EXPERIENCES WHICH  
HE RECOUNTED AGAIN AND AGAIN



populace who, after weeks of gloom, suddenly found cause for joy. There were banquets, parades and every sort of public function. Congress, not to be outdone in showering honors, voted to divide fifty thousand dollars among the personnel of the *Constitution*, ordering a special gold medal to be struck for Captain Hull and silver duplicates for his officers. New York gave the Captain a gold key in a gold box to signify that he had the freedom of the city, and Philadelphia presented him with a service of silver plate.

“Nor were the crew neglected. The enlisted men were entertained and encouraged to talk of their share in this adventure. And undoubtedly they did, embroidering their yarns to suit the occasion. It is from this source that we get many of the legends which have been repeated with a word or two added at each telling as they come down through the years. Every one of those hardy tars had his particular experiences which he recounted again and again. Many saw the same incident in a little different way and each spoke of it from his own point of view, with due regard for his audience. Thus, from much repetition and the need for color in a tale, various fabulous narratives have been preserved. In two particulars at least they all agree. One was their veneration for the old ship, of whose good qualities they never wearied of talking. The other was the praise they gave to the skill and coolness of Captain Hull, whom these common seamen held in high admiration.

“All in all the triumph of the *Constitution* over the *Guerrière* was a great achievement for our Navy. It was won through the careful training of men and officers to quick obedience. In other words it was due to a discipline which had been inaugurated years before in that little war with

Tripoli. I often wonder how many people in those days gave a thought to Commodore Preble as they cheered for Captain Hull. Probably none. It would have been surprising if they had; yet, looking back through the long years in which the old ship has endured, it is well that we should keep in mind the Commodore who, in the cabin of the *Constitution*, established the system that made possible so fine a victory.

“Even before the battle with the *Guerrière*, ‘Old Ironsides’ had gained the reputation of being a lucky ship. Perhaps those strips of red cloth torn from the cloaks of the Humphreys girls had set a seal of good fortune upon her. At any rate she was exceedingly popular with both officers and men of the Navy, who were all anxious to sail on her. There was no longer any thought of keeping her laid up in port. The Secretary of the Navy was quite ready to have her go to sea again. His difficulty lay in deciding who should command her upon her next adventure; a somewhat embarrassing matter to decide in the circumstances. Captain Bainbridge had been promised the command and would have had it if Captain Hull had delayed his departure from Boston for even a day. That had been only two weeks before and was by no means forgotten. Meanwhile, the situation had altered amazingly. There are occasions when even a politician has to watch his step, as we say. He can’t shift heroes about to suit his whims. And Captain Hull was very much of a hero. Even a Secretary of the Navy hesitated to order Hull hither and yon. While it lasts, the people of a republic have an intense passion for their idols, which may not be disregarded by a government official no matter how high his place.

“It was Captain Hull himself who solved these difficul-

ties. He was man enough to give up his command to a brother officer who had played in hard luck. He remembered the months Bainbridge had spent as a prisoner in Tripoli, so he took himself out of the way to give another a chance at the hero business. It was a wholly unselfish proceeding on the part of Captain Hull. He could have kept the *Constitution* if he had insisted upon it. I am sure he was sacrificing his own wishes, because he was both fond of the ship and keen for active duty. Of course Congress should have seen to it that there were enough vessels in the Navy to give each of the few captains in the service a command. This, as we know they had neglected to do; and Captain Hull had to stay ashore. He didn't resign, however. He took any job they had to offer him and did all that lay in his power to further the interests of his country. This action is by no means the least reason for honoring the memory of Captain Isaac Hull.

"So, about the middle of September, Captain William Bainbridge took over the command of 'Old Ironsides.' We find a few changes in her personnel. Lieutenant Morris, because of his excellent record, had been promoted to a captaincy and given the *Adams*, a 28-gun sloop-of-war. His place as senior lieutenant was filled by George Parker. John Alwyn, who had been sailing master, was now a lieutenant. Amos Evans, the surgeon, was still aboard with a few more of the old staff. The *Hornet* and *Essex* were ordered to accompany our old ship; thus once more she flew the broad pennant of a commodore.

"For over a month the *Constitution* stayed in port making repairs and taking on stores. It was not until the end of October that she put to sea in company with the *Hornet*.

The *Essex*, which was to have been a part of this small squadron, was already upon the ocean; and Commodore Bainbridge expected to pick her up at one of the southern ports. In point of fact he never did. The *Essex*, under Captain David Porter, went off on a cruise of her own, and her adventures on that voyage make a tale well worth the telling.

“One thing should be noted in regard to the crew at the beginning of this cruise. They seriously objected to the change in commanders. Captain Hull was the man they wanted to sail under, and apparently they didn’t hesitate to express their dissatisfaction. They must have come near to mutiny, for the log mentions a good many punishments for insubordination. That they settled down finally and accepted conditions, is proved, for they had not fallen off in their fighting qualities.

“As the winter was coming on, Commodore Bainbridge sailed southward with the *Hornet*, commanded by Captain Lawrence. They hoped to find English ships trading with the coast towns of South America and, after touching at several ports in an effort to meet the *Essex*, they at length hove-to on the 13th of December off the coast of Brazil opposite San Salvador. The *Hornet* was sent into the harbor to find out if the United States Consul had any news for them. He hadn’t; but Captain Lawrence returned much excited, with the information that a British sloop-of-war was anchored inside and about to sail for home. This vessel, named the *Bonne Citoyenne*, had been taken from the French, and was only slightly larger than the *Hornet*. A duel between the two would be most interesting and Captain Lawrence took up a position outside the neutral waters

of the harbor where the English captain could see him. He expected the *Bonne Citoyenne* to come out, for British officers in those days were not reluctant to accept a fair fight when it was offered. In this case the English captain, Pitt Barnaby Green, remained in the safe confines of the port of San Salvador declining the obvious invitation. At the end of two weeks Captain Lawrence sent in a formal challenge to which Commodore Bainbridge added his assurance that, no matter what happened, the *Constitution* would take no hand in the contest and, to show his good faith, sailed away out of sight, leaving the *Hornet* all by herself.

“Still Captain Green remained within the safety zone, while the American vessel waited, much to the annoyance of the people of San Salvador, who became rather peeved at what they considered the virtual blockading of a neutral port.

“Later this incident gave rise to considerable comment on both sides of the Atlantic, because it was so customary then to accept such a challenge that to avoid it was likely to bring a charge of cowardice against the captain who refused. And these charges were made by both sides, without justification in either case. In fairness to Captain Green, it should be explained that he had aboard the *Bonne Citoyenne* a half million pounds sterling which he had been ordered to take to England. That was a considerable amount of money and I think, in the circumstances, he was justified in declining the contest.

“So doubtless did most Americans when the facts became known. On the other hand the British author, William James, in his Naval History of Great Britain, perpetuates the charge of cowardice against Captain Lawrence by accus-

ing him of sending in the challenge only because the *Constitution* was at hand, assuring that his proposal would not be accepted. In other words, he wishes it believed that Lawrence was bluffing. And yet, only two pages on in his none too accurate record, James says that the *Hornet* laid off the harbor of San Salvador alone for eighteen days, when she was chased away by the British ship-of-the-line *Montague*. There were then, according to this British historian, two weeks at least in which Captain Lawrence wasn't bluffing. It doesn't make a great deal of difference to us what an obviously prejudiced historian wrote; yet, even though a great many years have passed since the event, James's history is still read; and I have spoken of the incident because I don't like unsupported charges of cowardice against our naval officers to go undenied.

"Meanwhile 'Old Ironsides' was off on her own, looking for any sort of English ship that might come along. At about nine o'clock in the morning of September 29th, we find her about thirty miles off shore on the port tack. About an hour later two sails were seen, and everyone on the ship immediately became interested. Shortly after they had been sighted, these two strangers separated, one sailing toward the shore and the other, a large frigate, making directly for the *Constitution*. She was His Britannic Majesty's warship *Java*, commanded by Captain Lambert. The other was a captured American merchantman which, we may say here, was retaken by Captain Lawrence while he waited in the *Hornet* off San Salvador for the *Bonne Citoyenne*, which never came out to him.

"There was a time when the identities of the *Constitution* and the *Java* were in doubt to those aboard. Each displayed

private signals, and these being unanswered confirmed the suspicion that they were hostile craft. Also it shortly became evident that the *Java* meant to engage; and Captain Bainbridge, whose profession it was to fight enemy ships, proceeded to make ready.

“The weather was by no means ideal for the *Constitution*. The sea was smooth and the wind exceedingly light. The first thing our commodore did was to draw the *Java* farther away from the shore so that ‘Old Ironsides’ should have plenty of water under her and enough sea room to enable the captain to manipulate his vessel as he chose. To this end he headed for the southeast, and the *Java* followed on a parallel course to windward. Somewhat naively, in view of what happened, Captain Lambert reports chasing her and evidently had a notion that the *Constitution* was trying to get away. He considered that he was quite successful in this chase, for the *Java* was much the faster in the light airs which were blowing and rapidly overhauled the *Constitution*.

“About half past one in the afternoon Commodore Bainbridge changed his course, took in some of his sails, and displayed his colors, including the broad pennant on the mainmast. The *Java* hoisted her flags and ran down on the weather quarter of the *Constitution*. At two o’clock they began firing at long range, both ships suffering in the exchange. As they drew near to each other the English ship, being much the faster, attempted to cross the bows of the *Constitution* in order to rake her. To avoid this, Commodore Bainbridge let off a broadside and, hidden by the smoke, wore his vessel; that is, he put his helm up and swung his stern into the wind, which is just the opposite of tacking.

This brought the two ships again on a parallel course and saved the American vessel from a destructive fire throughout her whole length. For nearly an hour the *Java* held the weather gauge, and twice more Commodore Bainbridge escaped being badly hit by this manœuvre of wearing. Unless one knows considerable about the sailing of a ship these shifts of position are not easy to understand. In this engagement the *Java* had the advantage, and her captain used it with much skill, which was matched by the readiness of our sailors in the rigging of 'Old Ironsides,' who responded to orders from the quarter-deck with promptness and precision. This battle was to prove the importance of training the sailors as well as the gunners in the American Navy. Had the work aloft been dilatory or clumsy, the men who aimed the cannon would never have had an opportunity to end the fight as they did. The enemy's gunfire was directed at the rigging, and musket balls from the *Java*'s fighting-tops whistled about our sailor's heads. Nevertheless they did their work as coolly as if they were alone upon the open sea. It is well to realize that in those days naval battles were not won by cannon alone. For a long time during this engagement 'Old Ironsides' was at a great disadvantage because her antagonist was a swifter vessel in light airs on a smooth sea. Our men had to be on the alert constantly to avoid being trapped into a position which would have ended her career. Three times the *Java* sought to rake 'Old Ironsides,' and three times her sailors saved her from a possible catastrophe.

"The vessels on both sides were exceedingly well handled, although the *Constitution* was handicapped by having her wheel shot away. This made it necessary to relay the orders to the men working the relieving tackle two decks below.

No comparison can be made between the two frigates in marksmanship or rapidity of fire. Our gunners had not been idle. As in the battle with the *Guerrière*, the Americans aimed their cannon, and their shots told. They were ordered to aim high to cripple the rigging of the *Java* and so destroy the advantage she held in speed. And shortly there came a time when Captain Lambert found his gear so cut that he could no longer trust his masts to stand up if he continued to twist and turn in his efforts to rake the *Constitution*. Moreover, many of his men had been killed or wounded by the deadly musket fire of the American marines, and, realizing a disastrous end in sight if this sort of fighting continued, he attempted to resort to the favorite British method of boarding an enemy. He ordered the *Java* laid alongside the *Constitution* and told his boatswain to blow his pipes cheerfully as the men gathered in the waist, ready to spring to a hand-to-hand encounter.

"However, to do this was no easy task, for the stout-hearted Commodore Bainbridge saw what was coming and prepared for it. He ordered cannon on the spar-deck loaded with grape and canister, whistled up his men to repel boarders, sent word to the marines to fire into the huddled sailors waiting to leap over his bulwarks, and was ready to meet his foe if they should attempt to board 'Old Ironsides.' They never did reach her decks. The fire of the American was devastating. At almost three o'clock the jib-boom of the *Java* fouled the mizzen rigging of our ship; five minutes late that jib-boom was shot away and the bowsprit with it; a quarter of an hour later the main-topmast fell; not long after the gaff and spanker-boom were demolished, and at about four o'clock the mizzenmast went by the board. In

something less than an hour our gunners had cut down every mast and spar on the English ship, and yet her men fought on.

“They were brave, those British seamen. The decks and sides of their vessel were so littered with sailcloth and rigging that every time they discharged a gun it set fire to this mass of débris. Yet they did not despair. Their Captain Lambert was wounded, mortally as it proved, and the command devolved upon Lieutenant Chads. He continued to fight with the utmost gallantry, encouraging his men until even in their helpless state they cheered, struggling on with typical doggedness. They were a sturdy set of men on the *Java* and they didn’t give in until every one of their guns was silenced, their colors shot away and nothing stood above their decks save the stump of the mainmast. Commodore Bainbridge, believing that his enemy had surrendered, drew off to look over his own ship and repair the damage done her. She was scarcely hurt at all. Her steering-wheel had been shot away and later on was replaced by the one from the *Java*. Further than a few cut ropes and sails, the *Constitution* was uninjured, and in an hour was back, standing across the bows of her helpless enemy.

“Perhaps as a gesture of defiance, or to hearten the men under him, Lieutenant Chads had nailed the English colors to the stump of the mast. It is possible that he wanted to go on fighting; surely he was brave enough. Yet he was also wise enough to realize the uselessness of further slaughter and at last he struck his flag. Lieutenant Parker was sent aboard to take possession, and so ended the second famous victory for ‘Old Ironsides.’

“As in the case of the *Guerrière*, the *Java* was so badly damaged that she had to be blown up. There was some controversy over the number of prisoners we took, because, in addition to her regular complement, the *Java* had aboard sailors for three other ships and also the new British Governor of Bombay and his staff. It seems probable that 378 were captured, and the losses amounted to 48 killed and 102 injured. On board the *Constitution* 12 were killed and 22 wounded. Among the former is included Lieutenant John C. Alwyn, the old ship’s sailing-master when she fought the *Guerrière*, who died from his wounds a month later. Commodore Bainbridge was one of those severely injured. In spite of this he remained on deck all through the night, seeing to the disposition of the prisoners and their belongings.

“As usual the people ashore indulged in a considerable amount of recrimination. What is more interesting to note is the great courtesy with which the naval gentlemen treated each other. There was an exchange of high compliments in regard to the skill and gallantry displayed on both sides in the battle. There is not the slightest disposition to disparage the fine qualities of the men on either ship, and Commodore Bainbridge records most feelingly his sorrow at Captain Lambert’s death. The latter lived until he reached shore and, as he was carried off the *Constitution*, Commodore Bainbridge, so crippled by his wounds that he had to be supported by two of his officers, bade his late antagonist good-by and returned his surrendered sword. It is splendid to think of the treatment accorded one another by the officers who did the fighting. They were as careful of their honor

in the hour of victory as they were to sustain it during the battle. They were considerate of the feelings of the vanquished and quick to give credit for skill and fortitude. It is usually the non-combatants safe at home who take pleasure in belittling the achievements of a foe.

“After the destruction of what was left of the *Java*, Commodore Bainbridge sent his prisoners ashore at San Salvador under parole not to fight against us during the remainder of the war. While they were in port Lieutenant General Hislop, the new Governor of Bombay, presented the Commodore with a gold-mounted sword, in token of his appreciation of the treatment he and his companions had received on board the *Constitution*. Lieutenant Chads, in his report to the Admiralty, was at pains to emphasize the generosity of the Americans, and referred to them as ‘gallant enemies.’

“‘Old Ironsides’ returned to her home port at the end of February, 1813, to be greeted by the overjoyed citizens of Boston in very much the way they had greeted Captain Hull. There were parades, banquets and receptions. Congress expressed its thanks, struck off another gold medal and appropriated a second fifty thousand dollars for the officers and crew of the *Constitution*. The orators of Congress, you will observe, were quick to vote these substantial compliments. Sad to relate the previous fifty thousand dollar reward still remained unpaid, and not until Commodore Bainbridge went to Washington and did considerable talking about it was the actual money forthcoming.

Mr. Shepard rose and went to the bookshelves, returning a moment later with a book.

“Here,” he went on, “is what the English were thinking

after the destruction of the *Java*. Let me read you an extract from the *London Times* of March 20th, 1813:

“ ‘The public will learn with sentiments which we shall not presume to anticipate, that a third British frigate has struck to an American. This is an occurrence that calls for serious reflection—this, and the fact stated in our paper of yesterday, that Lloyds’ List contains notices of upward of five hundred British vessels captured in seven months by the Americans. Five hundred merchantmen and three frigates! (Ay, and three sloops-of-war!)’

“ ‘Can the statements be true; and can the English people hear them unmoved? Anyone who had predicted such a result of an American war, this time last year, would have been treated as a madman or a traitor. He would have been told, if his opponents had condescended to argue with him, that long ere seven months had elapsed, the American flag would be swept from the seas, the contemptible navy of the United States annihilated, and their maritime arsenals reduced to a heap of ruins. Yet down to this moment, not a single American frigate has struck her flag. They insult and laugh at our want of enterprise and vigour. They leave their ports when they please, and return to them when it suits their convenience; they traverse the Atlantic; they beset the West India Islands; they advance to the very chops of the channel; they parade along the coasts of South America; nothing chases, nothing intercepts, nothing engages them but to yield them triumph.’

“So much for the *Times*: The *London Pilot* of the same date says: ‘We lament most deeply to have to state that another British Frigate, the *Java*, has been taken by the American frigate *Constitution*. . . . There appears not, on this

occasion, that deficiency in point of numbers which, in prior instances, passed for the principal cause of the success of the Americans,' and so on, in the same strain.

"The *London Star* mourns that 'It is our painful duty to record another humiliating sacrifice to the Americans, in the capture of the *Java*, one of the finest British frigates that ever was launched.'

"So in this victory 'Old Ironsides' had proved even to her enemy that her first success was not an accident. One swallow does not make a summer; but two go far toward establishing a change in the weather. Our Navy had demonstrated that it contained more than one skilful officer. It had justified its contention that, ship for ship and man for man, it could hold its own. Also it could flatter itself that it had taught a lesson to the 'Mistress of the Seas.'"

## CHAPTER XX

“‘OLD IRONSIDES’ is so closely identified with the development of our Navy and of all those ‘good boys’ who began their careers under the eyes of Commodore Preble that we ought to take a quick glance at what the other ships of our tiny fleet were doing.

“Eleven days after the *Constitution* had beaten the *Guerrière*, the *Essex* was cruising around, training her crew and looking for English ships. She was under the command of Captain David Porter. He had been first lieutenant of the *Philadelphia* on her ill-fated adventure off Tripoli. One of the midshipmen, a lad of thirteen years, was David Glasgow Farragut, who afterward became the first Admiral of the United States Navy.

“The *Essex* was a very busy ship. Her men were especially drilled for boarding operations and had earned the reputation of being the best swordsmen in the fleet. On the 13th of August, 1812, she came upon the British sloop-of-war *Alert*, or rather the *Alert* came upon her and, thinking the American vessel a merchantman, immediately gave chase. Captain Porter, seeing what was in the wind, put out drags over the stern to reduce his speed while he sent his sailors aloft to make sail and, to the pursuing vessel, gave every appearance of struggling desperately to escape. The *Alert* naturally overtook the *Essex*, opened fire upon her, and a few minutes afterward lowered her own flag in surrender. She was very much smaller than the American frigate and the incident is of interest only because it was one

more warning to the British that they would have to stop being indifferent to the odds against them.

“The *Essex* sent in the *Alert* as a prize, and went off looking for more trouble. She returned to New York on the 7th of September, having captured ten English craft and made four hundred and twenty-three prisoners; which wasn’t a bad record for a little over three weeks’ cruising.

“Captain Jacob Jones was another officer who was on the *Philadelphia* when she was captured by Jussuf Caramalli. At the time of which we are talking, he was in command of the 18-gun sloop *Wasp*. On the 18th of October, 1812, she had an engagement with the *Frolic*, a British 19-gun vessel. The two were very evenly matched and the struggle between them was fought out desperately. It is reported that the two sloops were so close together that the rammers in the hands of the gunners on the *Wasp* struck the sides of the *Frolic* through the open ports as the crew loaded the guns. At the end of half an hour the jib-boom of the *Frolic* caught in the mizzen rigging of the *Wasp* and the Americans boarded the British ship. A dreadful sight met their eyes as they reached the deck of the enemy. There was not an Englishman capable of opposing them. Only a man at the wheel, the captain and two or three of the crew were on their feet. Lieutenant Biddle, who had led the boarding, party, lowered the flag of the *Frolic* a little more than forty minutes after the first shot had been fired. Of the *Frolic*’s crew not twenty had escaped unhurt. Every officer had been wounded and two killed. Altogether, out of a complement of 110 men, thirty had been killed, and sixty wounded. The *Wasp* had five killed and the same number injured.

“This is only another instance of our superior gunnery.

Even in the heavy sea which was running, our men aimed their weapons coolly and deliberately, waiting until the roll of the sloop gave them a fair target. The little *Wasp* however, had only a short time to enjoy her victory. A few hours after the engagement, while Captain Jones was repairing his rigging, along came the *Poictiers*, a British ship-of-the-line, and although the *Wasp* tried to get away she was captured and taken in to Bermuda.

“Stephen Decatur, another of Preble’s ‘good boys,’ was adding to his fame during this year of 1812. He was now a commodore in command of the *United States*, a sister ship of the *Constitution*, built at the same time. Almost at the end of October he was cruising off the South American shore when the British frigate *Macedonia* hove in sight. She was new and well equipped and her men hailed the chance to fight the *United States*. At a little after ten o’clock in the morning they started shooting at one another. An hour and a half later the *Macedonia* struck her colors. The *United States* suffered somewhat in her rigging. A lieutenant and six seamen were killed and five wounded. The British frigate had more than one hundred shots in her hull, her mizzenmast was gone, the fore and main topmasts had been shot away and only two guns on her spar-deck could be fired at the end of the engagement. Of her crew forty-three were killed and sixty-one wounded. The fact that the *United States* was a somewhat larger vessel than the *Macedonia* does not account for the enormous difference in damage done to the two frigates. Commodore Decatur was a much more skilful commander, who out-manœuvred his opponent again and again. In addition, our gunnery was vastly superior. We were better trained both on the quarter-deck

and in the forecastle. Commodore Decatur brought his prize into New London during December, and there was great rejoicing. The *Macedonia* was refitted and patched up, so that another frigate was added to our Navy. The usual compliments were paid Decatur and his men; parades, receptions and banquets. At one of the latter we find Hull and Jones with Decatur, which would guarantee an evening of toasts.

“As against these victories we must mention losses also. The *Nautilus*, you remember, was taken by the squadron which the *Constitution* escaped at the beginning of the war. The *Wasp*, as I have just told, was picked up by a ship-of-the-line, and the *Vixen*, a 12-gun schooner, was taken by the English frigate *Southampton*, of 32-guns. Such, very briefly were the chief engagements of our Navy in the year 1812, and the effect of these upon the people of the two countries was exactly what might have been expected. In America, our victories at sea filled our citizens with enormous enthusiasm for our sailors and the service. This, in time, inspired our orators at Washington, who, as a result of their profession, I suppose, cannot anticipate anything. It had been necessary for Stewart and Bainbridge to persuade President Madison not to shut up our ships; and consent to their sailing had been given only because the politicians argued that it was cheaper to let the British capture our vessels than to care for them ourselves. In spite of the neglect of Congress, our Navy had justified its existence. The only exploits in the war so far in which the nation could take pride had been performed by our sailors, whose services in the beginning had been thought worthless. Perhaps there were members of the Government who expressed regret at

their short-sightedness. I never happened to find any such acknowledgment.

“However, early in 1813, Congress did pass a bill appropriating the money to build four ships-of-the-line and six frigates. To be sure none of these vessels ever went to sea until after peace was made with England. Nevertheless it was concrete evidence that the Navy had proved the worth of the money spent on it, which, for the time being at least, was something gained.

“The people of England were amazed at the success of what they had termed our ‘contemptible little pine-built navy.’ That any ships of ours should have sunk their unbeatable frigates called for explanations, which came thick and fast. The apologists insisted that the *Constitution* was not a frigate but a ship-of-the-line; which was nonsense. They declared that the reason for American success was that our boats were manned by British sailors; which was worse nonsense and by no means complimentary to their nationals if, as was asserted, their seamen fought better *against* their own country than *for* it. The English press was filled with all sorts of silly and untruthful statements. We were accused of trickery of the basest kind, condemned for dishonesty and cowardice; as if by calling us names they would heal the wounds in their national pride, which were severe. Every newspaper in Great Britain now strove to outdo its competitors in bitter denunciation of us. It was as if, by defending our rights to some purpose, we had sunk to the extreme depths of degradation; and our colossal presumption in daring to batter down any of the ‘wooden walls of old England’ was little short of a crime no words could adequately describe. They went to the limit of vituperation,

and the London *Times* sounded a ponderous warning by saying that this recent enemy would from then on become insolent in their new-found confidence.

“The British Admiralty, while prolific in excuses, was also entirely practical. They forbade English vessels mounting 18-pound guns from engaging the American 24-pounders; then they went earnestly to work constructing new ships after our models, all of which is amusing in the light of their ridicule of our vessels before the war. Also they thought it wise to stop reporting British losses, as if they feared the people of England might be panic-stricken if they learned of any more American successes.

“It is a funny situation to look back upon. The somewhat dismayed reaction in Great Britain can be explained only by the overwhelming faith they had developed in their own superiority. To be sure we had demonstrated that we could fight if we had to, but we had done nothing to impair the naval strength of Great Britain. She was still ‘Mistress of the Seas’ and the ‘wooden walls of Old England’ were intact, as she very shortly showed. With the opening of 1813, she increased her marine forces in the western Atlantic with a view to blockading our harbors so that our few warships would not dare to go out and interfere with her commerce. Squadrons were placed before the principal ports and very soon it was almost impossible for any of our ships to put to sea. A few of them did escape. The *Essex* found her way to the Pacific and was gone a year and a half, having as glorious a time as did Sir Francis Drake in the old days.

“We have talked a good deal about the training of our sailors. We had learned its worth in several notable victories.

This was to be emphasized in one of our defeats. You remember the *Hornet*, and Captain Lawrence who challenged the *Bonne Citoyenne* to fight? He was chased away from San Salvador by a ship-of-the-line. Some time afterward he made himself and his vessel famous by beating the British brig *Peacock*. When he came home they ordered him to the *Chesapeake*, that unlucky ship of 38 guns which had started for the Mediterranean under Commodore Barron. She left Boston harbor on June 1st, 1813, with a new crew which had never been drilled, and a complement of officers who scarcely knew each other, leaving behind her first lieutenant, ill in hospital. Outside she met the British frigate *Shannon*, commanded by Captain Philip Broke, one of the few English officers who believed in training his crew and who had been at it for seven years on the same ship. Some say he had sent Lawrence a challenge, which the latter, remembering the *Bonne Citoyenne*, could not refuse. The natural result followed. The *Chesapeake* was taken, and poor Captain Lawrence died, shouting: 'Don't give up the ship!'

"There are no excuses to be offered for this loss. It was another proof of the necessity for preparation which no amount of courage and reckless daring can ever replace. It is too bad that a lesson so tragically learned cannot be remembered by the gentlemen of Washington in whose hands rests the fate of our Navy.

"The contest had now entered a stage where it was something of a game between blockading squadrons and small vessels striving to escape. Some few did. There were a number of minor engagements beside those of which I have spoken, and many privateers managed to make it uncomfortable for English merchantmen. Still, the British Navy

assumed that we were bottled up in our harbors and trade might go on as if no war existed.

“Meanwhile what of the *Constitution*? Shortly after her arrival in Boston with the news of the victory over the *Java* she was laid up for a greatly needed overhauling. Captain Charles Stewart was put in command of her, and Commodore Bainbridge was transferred to the Boston Navy Yard. It was under his eyes that ‘Old Ironsides’ was thoroughly repaired. Evidently she needed it, for it was not until late in the autumn of 1813 that she was ready to ship a new crew. In this she had no difficulty. The ‘Old Lady,’ as they sometimes called her, had gained an enviable reputation; and so eager were American sailors to enlist aboard her that the recruiting officers could pick and choose. Most of the men came from New England, and it is said that they were so experienced that, if need arose, they could fight the ship without officers.

“On the last day of 1813, Captain Stewart put to sea and went south. About the middle of February he captured the British schooner *Pictou*, which he destroyed. There was no glory gained in that. Coming north again, they sighted an English frigate which proved to be the *Pique* of 36 guns, commanded by Captain Maitland. Captain Stewart tried to catch her and failed. She escaped during the night and the English captain may well have congratulated himself for his success in avoiding an encounter with the *Constitution*. He would almost certainly have been beaten. Moreover he had explicit orders from his superiors not to engage in an unequal combat. The British tried to pretend, you know, that the *Constitution* was a 74-gun ship; which, of course, she wasn’t.

“William James, the British historian, gives an amusingly incorrect account of this incident, which illustrates the length to which he goes in order to discredit Americans under any circumstances. He insists that Captain Stewart was afraid to attack the *Pique* because he mistook her 18-pound cannon for 24-pounders. Then he tells at length the great sorrow felt by the crew of the English vessel when they saw the *Constitution* running away. They wanted to chase her and assembled on the quarter-deck with the request that they should be taken into action with the Yankee ship. According to James’s story, they seemed quite pathetic about it, and there is a hint of tears in the tale when Captain Maitland failed to grant their request. So persistent were they in their demands that the Captain was forced to read to them, (also in tears no doubt) his instructions from the Admiralty forbidding him to fight a larger vessel than his own. The crew expressed the conviction that this order was a silly one, and returned to their quarters in so sullen a mood that they refused to drink their grog.

“This is an example of the absurd efforts which this partisan historian makes to excuse the English Captain for not fighting a battle in which he was bound to be beaten. Captain Maitland was a wise man and evidently a skilful one, to have escaped the *Constitution*. It needed no invention of the fertile James to preserve that officer’s reputation; but for a long time the English felt it necessary to foster the fiction that a British ship could beat a cruiser of any other nation, no matter what its size.

“The *Constitution*, as I said, had very little luck on this voyage, and at length, her provisions running low, she started back for her home port. On her way up the coast

she took several prizes in the West Indies and on April 2d was off Portsmouth. The next morning the wind died out almost completely and two vessels were sighted coming down upon her before a fresh breeze which did not reach the nearly becalmed *Constitution*. These strangers were shortly discovered to be the British frigates *Junon* and *Tenedos* each of 38 guns. To engage them both was too doubtful an enterprise, and Captain Stewart wisely decided that discretion was the better part of valor. With little or no wind, being discreet was not so easy a proposition; and by half past nine it was seen that the *Tenedos* was gaining upon the *Constitution*. To lighten his vessel, Captain Stewart pumped out his fresh water and threw overboard a quantity of his provisions. This helped a bit and for a time the old ship held her own.

“The Captain, lacking a pilot who could take him into Salem, headed ‘Old Ironsides’ for Marblehead. Once again he was forced to lighten his ship by throwing over spare spars and much of the prize goods they had captured. By this means he reached Marblehead at one o’clock and anchored under the guns of Fort Sewall.

“Meanwhile, from the shore, the people had seen what was going on and for miles in all directions rallied to defend ‘Old Ironsides.’ The militia were assembled and the entire populace rushed down to the coast armed with cannon and muskets, preparing to battle against the two menacing frigates in the offing.

“It was a Sunday morning and the good people of the country were at church. Doctor Bently of the Second Church of Salem was in the midst of his sermon when he heard a shout outside: ‘Save the *Constitution*!’ The minister halted

his address, told his congregation that it was more important to rescue 'Old Ironsides' than it was to listen to any sermon of his and led them out of the church. It is reported that Doctor Bently was a short, stout man and that the thermometer was 85. He struggled on bravely, only to give out at last. Whereupon he was placed upon one of the cannon and dragged to the scene of action where he could exhort all within reach of his voice to save the *Constitution*. You see the great ship was not only popular with the sailors but with all the people of the country, and especially with New Englanders, who took a personal pride in her.

"And she was saved. The British officers could see through their glasses the feverish preparations the Americans were making to protect this favorite frigate. Late in the afternoon they sailed away. 'Old Ironsides' moved to Salem and a few days later slipped down to Boston, where she was blockaded for nearly nine months.

## CHAPTER XXI

“UNTIL the end of 1813 the English held to their notion that New England could be induced to secede from the Union, and on that account they had been careful not to irritate the sensibilities of the people along our Eastern coast. Their blockading activities had all been directed to other parts of the country, and while their agents from Canada were busy with what we now call propaganda, the sailors of His Majesty’s Navy were warned not to bother the New England Yankees unduly. The time came when they concluded that their expectations were vain and, in punishment for encouraging false hopes, they became excessively severe and sent out a strong squadron to harry the Maine shores. They landed sailors and marines at unprotected points and destroyed the little villages of the fishermen. Then, with an augmented force under command of Sir Thomas Hardy, they prepared for an attack upon Boston.

“This was a serious threat. Our chief marine stores and shipyards were there; the town was one of the most prosperous in the country; and the English thought that, having failed to conciliate the New Englanders, they could drive them into suing for any sort of peace by bombarding their most important city.

“They were quite right in their estimate of the way our people viewed such an attack upon Boston, which was practically defenseless. They did not want it blown up, and they set to work to protect it with characteristic energy. It takes a good deal to stir up the American people to the point of

fighting, and we are shamefully neglectful of even ordinary precautions against aggression. Our history is filled with crises in which by a furious activity we assembled the national resources in a desperate effort to make up for lost time, quickly forgetting, when the anxious moment was past, the enormous cost of delay both in money and in lives. With the British squadron looked for any day, the people of Boston turned out to protect their city. Parsons, peddlers, tinkers, tailors, bakers, bankers, people of all grades of life worked side by side like mad, building earthworks. A heavy battery was planted on Dorchester Heights, which reminds us of the Revolution.

“In all this hurried preparation Commodore Bainbridge played a busy part. He was still in charge of the Navy Yard and had just seen to the launching of a new line-of-battle-ship called the *Independence*. She was armed with whatever guns could be got together and towed to a position beside the *Constitution*, which lay commanding the channel. Every possible precaution was taken, when, in due time, the British squadron was reported on its way to Boston.

“This news being confirmed, Commodore Bainbridge wrote to the officer in command of the State Militia telling him that it was time the soldiers were on the job. No attention was paid to this, and the Commodore wrote again. In answer there came a committee of gentlemen sent by the Governor of Massachusetts with a remarkable proposal which they submitted to the Commodore. They suggested that, as the British squadron was plainly interested in capturing our ships, we should send out the *Constitution* and the *Independence* and let the British have them. In this way

the city would be saved at the expense of an old frigate and a half-built ship-of-the-line. You see all the Tories didn't die after the Revolution. It isn't on record exactly what the Commodore thought of this project. He must have been greatly shocked to think that anyone would be willing to sacrifice 'Old Ironsides' in such a way. He absolutely refused to consider such a plan and thus he saved the ship which had helped to make our little Navy famous throughout the world.

"For the *Constitution* would have been needlessly sacrificed. When the British squadron appeared and noted the preparations which had been made to receive it, the vessels moved on without firing a shot. Shortly afterward they were reported off New York harbor. Here the same sort of frenzied activity prevailed, and all classes in that city had worked day and night at the defenses. Once again Sir Thomas moved on, apparently satisfied with victories over unprotected villages, which he bombarded with no regard for the helpless inhabitants.

"Meanwhile Captain Stewart paced the decks of the *Constitution*, fretting to be away. He kept his crew and officers on the alert, ready to move at a moment's notice. Before the harbor, three English ships were constantly on guard—a 50-gun frigate, the *Newcastle*, the *Acasta*, a 40-, and the sloop *Arab* of 18 guns. There they stayed and watched, prepared to swoop down upon any sail that dared to put to sea. Weeks passed and winter was near. Captain Stewart continued to pace his quarter-deck, hoping that a day would come when he could take the *Constitution* into the ocean to seek an adventure that would match those which had already made her famous.

“On the 18th of December, for some reason or other, the patrol was gone. Captain Stewart lost not a moment’s time and at last was free. A week later he was off Bermuda, where he made a prize of a merchantman named the *Lord Nelson*. He searched her for any commodities that might be useful on his own vessel, took off the crew and sank the ship. Off he went again, but, as upon the previous cruise, they seemed out of luck. They picked up a merchantman here and there, which, of course, added nothing to the reputation of their vessel. They wanted to take another English frigate, and these were scarce in the neighborhood of the *Constitution*. In fact it was an almost universal belief that whenever possible His Majesty’s frigates avoided ‘Old Ironsides.’

“Early in February Stewart had crossed the ocean and was off the coast of Portugal. Here he encountered the bark *Julia* and learned that a peace had been concluded at Ghent between Great Britain and the United States.

“This was far from cheering news to Captain Stewart and his men; not that they must then and there cease their efforts to annoy the British. The treaty had to be ratified by the two governments and, even after that, thirty days time would be allowed to notify ships at sea. Nevertheless it was a warning to them that the end of their opportunities was in sight and if they didn’t have any better fortune than had followed them so far their chance of deathless fame was very slim. A confirmation of the report the *Julia* had given was obtained from two Americans on board a Russian ship, so there was no sense in hoping that the information was incorrect.

“Determined to find something they might fight with

honor, Captain Stewart steered the *Constitution* down the coast. Their only reward was a merchantman which they picked up on the 17th and sent home as a prize. This sort of disappointment continued for another three days, while men and officers hung over the bulwarks, looking in every direction for a sail, growing more and more discouraged, yet not able to blame their ill-fortune on anybody except the English whom they couldn't find. I think they must all have been in a very bad humor during this period.

"Then one morning Captain Stewart came on deck whistling and ordered the *Constitution* headed for the Madeiras. This evidence of his cheerfulness may not be historically accurate; nevertheless he was in excellent spirits and to say he was whistling is one way of showing how he felt. His officers looked at him in amazement. What had their captain to be gay about? There hadn't been any message received to give him more information than they had. They wanted to know by what right he was whistling when there wasn't the ghost of a sail in sight and the days were slipping by.

"Naturally his officers were quite polite about it. When you're just a lieutenant on a warship you're inclined to be extremely politic about the manner in which you ask the captain why he is in a good humor. But Captain Stewart satisfied their curiosity. As you would say today he told them that he had a hunch. He was convinced that they would sight an English cruiser within twenty-four hours. If they didn't believe him they could content their souls in patience and wait. Meanwhile he continued to whistle.

"It is definitely reported that Captain Stewart had this hunch. What his officers may have said to it is not mentioned

in any log books or letters. They may have murmured in the junior mess that the 'old man had gone nuts,' or words to that effect. I'm sure they must have expressed themselves as wanting to fight ships, while vague and mysterious presentiments were no guarantee that they would have their wish, no matter how hard the captain whistled.

"Curiously enough the hunch worked. About one o'clock in the afternoon of February 20th, the lookout discovered a sail on the port bow and, at his shout, everybody below came tumbling up and those on deck fell over themselves trying to catch a sight of the stranger. In half an hour they knew she was a warship and presently, to leeward, another vessel appeared, evidently in company with her.

"It isn't hard to imagine the officers nudging each other and saying respectful things about the Captain's intuition, especially as the second vessel was identified as a large sloop-of-war and the first was a small frigate. That they were enemy cruisers they had no doubt, and their spirits rose at the prospect. Here was a chance to win glory, for although neither of the strange cruisers was as large as the *Constitution*, together they more than equalled her in armament. Moreover a single vessel was always at a disadvantage against two enemy ships, as it required very skilful seamanship to avoid being raked by one while directly engaged with the other.

"These considerations did not deter Captain Stewart, and he ordered his sailing-master to give chase. Indeed he had done that when the first ship was sighted; all the canvas 'Old Ironsides' could carry was set, and away they went. This is what everyone on her had been hoping and praying for and when they saw their foe break out their studding sails our

men were somewhat fearful lest they might escape. It was then about four o'clock in the afternoon, and it is none too easy to keep track of two vessels at night.

"So more sail was piled on the *Constitution*; Captain Stewart hoped to engage one of the enemy while the other was still some miles distant. In this he was disappointed. At half past four his main-royal mast gave way, which slowed the *Constitution* considerably. They shot off the long guns in the bow trying, if possible, to cripple the nearest of the vessels. It was too far to accomplish anything, and it was shortly evident that there was no way to keep the strangers apart. Captain Stewart made up his mind to fight them both, and drums were beaten to call the crew to quarters. They ran to their stations eager for the fray and very quickly everything was ready for the coming battle.

"It was a custom of the time to serve the crew with grog before going into an engagement, and while the *Constitution* was running down on the two ships a tub of spirits was set out. It is reported that the men were so keen for the battle that they refused to touch their usual drink, declaring roundly that they had no need of 'Dutch courage' that day. It sounds quite like a true tale, for at the end of the fight they demanded a double allowance. And as for 'Dutch courage' they certainly did not need it on the *Constitution*. Probably no frigate had ever been so well manned as it was by those hardy New Englanders who had been brought up on the ocean and were itching for what they felt would be their last chance at the British. Knowing that they would have two ships to fight, they looked forward to a contest in which all their mastery of sails and guns would be put to the test. They were ready and anxious for it to begin, entirely

aware of the fact that the more difficult the battle the more glory was to be had by winning it.

“The two British vessels were the *Cyane*, a frigate-built craft, and the *Levant*, a ship-sloop. The former fired a broadside of 454 pounds and her companion 309, a combined weight of 763 pounds against 704 for the *Constitution*. Our old ship had heavier planking on her sides, and Captain Stewart might have used this to advantage by keeping away and pounding his antagonists with his long range guns. This he did not do. He wanted to take both of His Majesty’s cruisers, and to that end sailed as close to them as he could, so that the carronades and 18-pounders of the English vessels had every opportunity to do their worst.

“In the beginning both sides strove to gain the weather position. It required extremely expert seamanship on the part of Captain Stewart to keep two antagonists to leeward, and for a time there was a fine twisting and turning of these ships while they circled about each other, waiting for the moment to dart in and deliver a raking broadside. The two English captains displayed masterly control of their boats, and their guns were aimed more accurately than those of any British vessel with which the *Constitution* had come in contact.

“At about six o’clock or a little after, the three vessels were in the formation of a huge triangle, the *Constitution* at the apex to windward of the others. All three opened fire, drawing closer to each other as they did so, and after fifteen minutes of continuous cannonading it was noticed on board ‘Old Ironsides’ that the fire of the enemy was perceptibly slackened. The sea was covered with smoke and, although the moon had come up, Captain Stewart could see

little of what was going on. When at length this cleared, the *Constitution* was abreast of the *Levant* with the *Cyane* coming up behind her to deliver a raking broadside over her stern. It was a serious position for the American frigate. Shots aimed the whole length of a vessel are very sure to hit something, and there was great danger that a mast might be cut away, in which case the *Constitution* might become unmanageable and fall an easy victim to the two vessels against her. Without a moment's hesitation Captain Stewart ordered a broadside fired at the *Levant* and, under cover of the smoke, he had his after-topsails braced and spilled the wind out of his foresails, so that instead of going forward, which was the expected manœuvre, he backed his ship across the bows of the *Cyane* and sent a raking fire into her. The *Levant*, seeing the dangerous position of her companion, gallantly tried to come to her assistance. Captain Stewart once more changed the trim of his canvas and shot ahead. This brought the *Levant* under a raking fire from 'Old Ironsides,' which damaged the sloop disastrously. Captain Falcon of the *Cyane*, trying to help the smaller vessel, ran between her and our frigate; and at this point the *Levant* withdrew from the contest in order to repair her badly cut rigging. A few moments later the *Constitution* was in such a position that the *Cyane* was helpless, and her captain, after a brave effort to stave off inevitable defeat, struck his flag. This was exactly forty minutes after the first broadside had been fired. The English frigate was almost a complete wreck. She had been hulled a number of times between wind and water. Her stays were so cut up that the masts were in danger of falling at any moment, and she had already suf-

ferred 38 casualties. With a few men, Lieutenant Hoffman was sent aboard to take command, while the officers of the *Cyane* were transferred to the *Constitution*.

“This had taken the greater part of an hour, and all the time Captain Stewart had the *Levant* in mind. He didn’t want to lose her, and at quarter of eight he filled his sails and went after her, thinking, naturally enough, that she was trying to get away. This was an entire mistake. Captain Douglas of the English sloop-of-war, had no intention of abandoning his countrymen. His withdrawal had been for the purpose of repairing his rigging, and when this was done he hurried back to get into the fight again. On the way he met the *Constitution* and they passed close to each other, exchanging broadsides as they went. Then the *Constitution* came under the stern of the *Levant* and raked her once more. By this time Captain Douglas discovered that the *Cyane* had struck and, perceiving the uselessness of continuing the fight alone, tried to get away. He was too late. The rigging of his sloop had been cut to pieces once more, the wheel shot away and no amount of courage would serve in his extremity. For half an hour he struggled to avoid capture and only after making every possible effort did he finally surrender. Lieutenant Ballard was sent from the *Constitution* with a prize crew, and another famous battle had been won by ‘Old Ironsides.’

“Due to the excellence of the English gunnery, the *Constitution* had been hulled a number of times, beside the damage to her rigging that was to be expected in any engagement. Only three men were killed and twelve wounded, eight less than those lost on the *Levant* alone; so that the

injuries inflicted by the *Constitution* on her two opponents were far greater in proportion than could be attributed to her heavier construction.

“Perhaps you think that this was the moment when the crew demanded their extra allowance of grog and sat down to gloat over their double victory? Not at all! There was a lot to be done, as no one could tell when another British frigate or ship-of-the-line would come sailing through the moonlight ready to give battle. As a matter of fact Captain Stewart had news of a heavy British squadron in the neighborhood, and his first thought was to put his vessel in shape for another fight should it become necessary. You must have noticed that this immediate preparation for eventualities was a part of the regular procedure. So, for three hours more, the crew worked at stopping holes, rigging new stays and braces, repairing torn canvas and attending to the thousand and one things needful to prepare the *Constitution* for another encounter. After that, perhaps, they demanded their extra grog and had a chance to talk things over.

“As with past battles in which ‘Old Ironsides’ was concerned, there are a great many tales told of this engagement. Every man aboard the ship treasured his personal recollections of incidents that happened in the thick of the fight. Many somewhat ghastly stories were recounted showing the indifference of these hardy sailors to the pain of dreadful injuries, as well as their reckless disregard of the enemy’s cannonade. It does not need a recounting of these narratives to prove that the men who sailed under Captain Stewart were brave. There never was a more brilliant feat than this performed by the sailors of ‘Old Ironsides’ in their contest with the *Cyane* and *Levant*. Quick thinking on the quarter-

deck and ready and prompt response in the rigging and at the guns made a combination hard to beat. You see, we keep coming back to the value of the constant training which distinguished our Navy in this war with England. Captain Stewart won an everlasting fame for his seamanship in backing and filling under cover of the smoke from the gunfire. By these manœuvres he avoided great damage to his own ship and raked both of his antagonists. Doubtless he had a natural aptitude for his calling, to which was added an experience begun as a cabin-boy in a merchantman when he was thirteen years old. As a commander of a fighting ship, however, it is not to be forgotten that he was captain of the *Siren* in the war with Tripoli and one of Edward Preble's 'good boys.'

"With some three hundred prisoners littering the decks of the *Constitution*, Captain Stewart looked about for a way of getting rid of them. Knowing that the war was soon to end, there was no point in holding them. Moreover they were a troublesome lot, constantly complaining of the loss of their belongings, which could not be found, although a diligent search was made on several occasions. The British officers quarreled continuously among themselves, striving without success to fix the blame of their capture; and it is on record that the crew of one of the English vessels broke into the spirits room and drank more grog than was good for them. This state of affairs did not please Captain Stewart. He ran down to the Cape Verde Islands, and, on the 10th of March, anchored in the harbor of Porto Praya with his two prizes. Here he found an English brig which he chartered to house his prisoners. A hundred of them were detailed to put her in order and others to transfer their belongings. This took a

great deal of time because of the heavy fog which lay over the harbor.

"Two days later, about noon, Lieutenant Shubrick heard an English midshipman who, with other British officers, was still aboard the *Constitution*, give an exclamation of joyful surprise and point to the entrance of the harbor. One of the other prisoners told him to keep quiet or words to the effect, and this drew our Lieutenant's attention to the matter. Looking toward the offing he saw the upper sails of a large ship above the low-lying haze and, although her hull was hidden, he concluded that she must be an English war vessel. As you would say, he 'beat it' for the cabin to report to Captain Stewart.

"It is probably a British frigate,' remarked the Captain with a cheerful smile, 'call all hands and we'll take her.'

"This is exactly the sort of thing you would expect Captain Stewart to say, and Lieutenant Shubrick hustled back to the deck to start things going. He was shouting orders when he noted that, in addition to the first set of sails he had seen, there had been added the upper canvas of two other vessels, all rather ghostly in the fog. This was quite a different matter and he tumbled down into the cabin again at top speed.

"There are three of 'em, sir!" he exclaimed somewhat breathlessly.

"It is just as well that Captain Stewart did not delay an instant. The Cape Verde Islands belonged to Portugal and he knew that the English would not hesitate to violate the neutrality of the port if they discovered the *Constitution* anchored there. Moreover, he was aware that the Governor of the Islands was sympathetic with the British cause, and

he could look for no protection from that quarter. If he was to save 'Old Ironsides' he must leave Porto Praya as swiftly and as inconspicuously as possible.

"Once more training helped. Captain Stewart leaped up the companion to the deck, gave orders to cut his cables, signaled Lieutenants Hoffman and Ballard on the *Cyane* and *Levant* to get under way at once, and set his sails in double quick time. Within fifteen minutes of the discovery of the British squadron, the *Constitution* was standing out of the harbor with her prizes close on her heels. It was smart work, and had it not been for the people ashore who saw them going, they would have escaped unnoticed. As it was, the English prisoners opened fire with the land batteries and so warned the incoming ships. Only the fog saved our 'Old Lady,' for she passed out to sea within gunshot of the three hostile vessels.

"As Captain Stewart had guessed, this squadron was composed of the *Leander* and *Newcastle*, 50-gun frigates, and the *Acasta*, a 40-. He could not be positive of their identity because of the fog; there was, however, no doubt about their actions. He could see by their upper sails that they had changed their course and were after him.

"Once more the *Constitution* was being chased by a strong enemy squadron which it would be the height of folly to engage. At sea the fog still clung to the water, making it difficult for either side to determine exactly who their opponents were. Captain Stewart was not one to run away from a fairly equal contest, and if the weather should clear and show him a foe with whom he might deal with the odds not too much against him, the English would find him ready enough to fight. As it was, the information he had received as to the

whereabouts of these three English frigates left him little hope that they would prove to be vessels less formidable.

“For a time the race was a stern one. One of the English frigates began to gain so steadily that Captain Stewart ordered two of his ship’s boats, which were dragging alongside, to be cut adrift rather than delay even the short time necessary to bring them aboard. Nor was he concerned only with the *Constitution*. The *Cyane* was dropping astern very rapidly and at about one o’clock he signaled her to change her course and shift for herself. He thought, perhaps, that one of the English ships would follow. Nothing of the sort happened. They ignored the *Cyane*, which shortly disappeared in the fog, and continued to bear down on the other two.

“The *Acasta*, the smallest and fastest of the British vessels, gradually drew to windward of our ships, while the others held their berths to leeward, and very shortly the position of the *Levant* became precarious. It was then that the pursuing frigates began to fire, and, although the mists still hid their ports, the flash from the cannon gave Captain Stewart a very good idea of the forces arrayed against him and confirmed his previous suspicion of the identity of the strangers. Later in the afternoon he signaled to the *Levant*, as he had to the *Cyane*, to tack away in the hope of dividing the British squadron; and Lieutenant Ballard altered his course. On the *Constitution* all eyes were strained to see what the enemy would do. The old ship could make shift to put up a battle with two of these frigates if necessary, with some hope of winning; and there were a few moments of keen anxiety to see how the Englishmen would act. Then, to the amazement of the Americans, all three of the British craft took after the *Levant*. How much of a relief it was to Cap-

tain Stewart to see this chase after him abandoned so abruptly I do not know. He and his officers must have laughed to see this formidable British squadron pursuing the little sloop.

“You may be sure there was an investigation of this performance by the British Admiralty, and Commodore Sir George Collier was somewhat put to it to give a reasonable explanation for his apparent stupidity. His excuse was that he mistook the *Levant* for the *Constitution*, which is hard to believe, and that he did not dare to divide his squadron in anticipation of a battle with ‘Old Ironsides.’ It was a decided compliment to the fighting qualities of our ship, and even the inventive William James fails to find a tale that will excuse Sir George. In America, it was a popular belief that the British captains were eager to avoid any conflict with the *Constitution*, and this tale went far to confirm it; especially as the English Commodore had started out with the boldly avowed purpose of sinking our ‘Old Lady’ and had been a long time finding her. I am inclined to be rather more sympathetic with Sir George than his own countrymen were. If I had been in his place, and had come to an engagement with the *Constitution* commanded by Charles Stewart and fought by the best crew that ever manned a frigate, I think I should have needed several ships-of-the-line.

“In abandoning the chase after ‘Old Ironsides,’ Sir George had not finished his bungling. His three vessels following the *Levant* crowded on all sail and Lieutenant Ballard, chased by an overwhelming force, ran for Porto Praya. His only chance for safety lay in getting his vessel under the guns of this neutral harbor. And even in this hope he was not sanguine; for he knew how little the English were likely to heed the neutrality of Portugal if, by ignoring it, they

could capture an American ship. However, he succeeded in reaching there ahead of his pursuers and anchored under the shore batteries. Then he awaited the coming of the squadron.

“He did not have to wait long. Sir George arrived and, seeing the *Levant*, opened fire upon it from all three frigates. Lieutenant Ballard told his men to lie flat on the decks. The English blazed away without doing any damage to the sloop though they did hit something. The fortifications of the town suffered considerably, much to the annoyance of the Governor. It was only when the shore batteries added their efforts to those of Sir George that Lieutenant Ballard lowered his flag. I do not know whether the shore guns hit the English ships in this exchange of shots aimed at the *Levant*. They may easily have done so if their gunnery was as bad as that on the British frigates. Of course Lieutenant Ballard was bound to surrender sooner or later. I hope he was at hand when Sir George Collier made his apologies to the Governor, although that is doubtful. At any rate he must have had a good deal of amusement out of the incident, in spite of the fact that it left him a prisoner of war.

“Not long after this, the *Constitution* crossed the ocean and, on the 2d of April, stopped at an island off the coast of Brazil to get rid of the troublesome English prisoners who were still aboard. From there she went north, halting for a few hours at Porto Rico, where it was learned that the peace negotiations of Ghent had been ratified and that no more fighting would be allowed. So there was nothing to do but go home, which Captain Stewart did.

## CHAPTER XXII

“WHEN Lieutenant Hoffman, in obedience to Captain Stewart’s orders, went off by himself in the *Cyane*, he made directly for America. He reached New York in April and his indefinite report on what had happened to the *Constitution* led to considerable anxiety over her fate. Then, on the 15th of May the ‘Old Lady’ herself sailed into the harbor and anchored off the Battery. She was back safe and sound after one more glorious adventure; and our ancestors from one end of the country to the other raised a mighty cheer.

“There was a repetition of the receptions, parades and banquets which usually followed the return of ‘Old Iron-sides’ from a cruise during the war. Congress struck off a special medal for Captain Stewart; New York found another gold key which unlocked all doors to the city; the Pennsylvania Legislature discovered a gold-mounted sword suitably engraved, which they presented to our latest hero.

“This victory over the *Cyane* and *Levant* ended the fighting history of the *Constitution*. She had achieved a remarkable record. Neither in battle nor in a storm had she ever been dismasted. She had won her victories at a minimum loss of life and with comparatively slight damage to her structure. No wonder she was called a lucky ship. Yet, although she was a staunch craft, the reason for her success was plain enough. From the first days of her fighting career she had been ably commanded. Preble, Hull, Bainbridge and

Stewart. It was under these four capable officers that she had won her renown. She was indeed a lucky ship!"

Mr. Shepard paused in his narrative and for a time there was silence in the room.

"What has been puzzling me," Joe remarked, "is how you remember it all."

"There's nothing remarkable in that," his grandfather replied with a smile. "I've read a lot about her, and, in all these years, there have been many who have written her story in one way or another. It has always been the same story, although the point of view has been different. For instance, President Roosevelt told of her activities in his book *The Naval War of 1812*. Before him, James Fenimore Cooper compiled the *Naval History of the United States*, from the very beginning up to the end of our last conflict with Great Britain. There are the *American State Papers*, besides log books in which her official life is recorded, and letters written by men who commanded her. In 1900 Professor Ira N. Hollis published *The Frigate Constitution*, a most accurate and sympathetic account of the career of 'Old Ironsides.' These books I have read over and over again, and perhaps have quoted unconsciously. But there are still a few facts to be told.

"On the 18th of February President Madison had proclaimed peace. The referee had blown his whistle. The war of 1812 was over. The two governments had ratified the treaty of Ghent, and the United States had no enemies in the world. From then on, our declarations of neutrality were respected by England. The European nations ceased to sneer openly at the Western Republic and, although they didn't

like us much, they were careful not to say so too loudly.

"The treaty itself did not particularly please either nation, and the question of impressing our sailors, for which we had gone to war, was not even mentioned in the document. Great Britain had not repudiated her assumption of the right to search our ships for seamen. Nevertheless it is to be noted with interest that she never did it again. Whatever arrangement the diplomats who discussed the treaty arrived at, the British Admiralty let it be known among officers of His Majesty's Navy that they were not to bother American vessels in the future.

"And this had been accomplished by that neglected Navy which President Madison and his cabinet wished to put in camphor for the duration of the war. Except for the battle of New Orleans, which came too late to affect the issue, our land forces had done nothing. The politicians' faith in the invincibility of militia had wasted enough money in utterly useless effort to have established both branches of our defensive service on a firm and practical foundation. This we could forgive readily if, from the disasters which resulted, they had learned a lesson. Unfortunately the gentlemen of Congress seem incapable of learning, no matter how dreadful a price may have been paid for the instruction.

"So, in this war of 1812 it was the despised Navy that proved itself capable, and 'Old Ironsides' earned the right to exist as an everlasting memorial to the men on both quarter-deck and forecastle who possessed so great a faith and so great a loyalty. Undismayed by a patronizing tolerance at home and a sneering contempt abroad, our sailors proved to the world that the rights of Americans on the

high seas must be respected. Thus was won our second war for independence.

“From New York the *Constitution* sailed for her home port of Boston, and there she stayed for about six years. From this time on her history is of purely sentimental interest. In 1821 she was once more the flag-ship of the Mediterranean squadron, under Commodore Jacob Jones. She had become famous all over the world, and in 1822 the English poet, Lord Byron, came limping aboard to have a look at her. He was a very much talked-of man at the time, and an aristocrat to the tips of his toes, although he was an enthusiastic advocate of democratic government and the equality of all men. He was a noted individual, and the officers of ‘Old Ironsides’ arrayed themselves in their best clothes and received him with honors. Evidently he had a fine time aboard the ship, for when he went away he declared that he would rather receive a nod from an American than a snuff-box from an Emperor. Which was a nice compliment to pay our officers and our country. Lord Byron was entirely sincere, and not long after this incident he began the efforts to free the Greeks which resulted in his death. It is worth while to mention such an occurrence to show the interest that all classes of people exhibited in the old frigate. Wherever she went the inhabitants of the country wanted to see the ship which had dared to defy the ‘Mistress of the Seas.’

“In 1828, after another period of service in the Mediterranean, the *Constitution* was back in the Boston Navy Yard with every prospect of never going to sea again. A Naval Commission decided that she had outlived her usefulness. To

make her seaworthy it would be necessary to spend more than her original cost, and it was recommended that she be either sold or destroyed.

“Without stopping to think, one is surprised to find a Naval Commission recommending the destruction of a ship which had played so prominent a part in the consolidation of our marine service. We are inclined to believe that the officers on this Commission must have been a stony-hearted lot without sentiment of any sort. That is certainly a mistake. I am sure they were most anxious to preserve the old ship, but it must be remembered that it is not the business of the Navy to spend the money they have doled out to them by a short-sighted Congress on monuments, no matter how worthy. They cannot afford pleasures of that kind, whatever their feelings may be. Their job is to build up as efficient a fighting force as they can with the inadequate appropriations reluctantly granted them. The three or four hundred thousand dollars it would have been necessary to spend to put the *Constitution* in shape were required for more pressing needs; so, regretfully, the Commission condemned ‘Old Ironsides’ to an ignominious end.

“Nor were the gentlemen of Congress, whose business it was to consider the preservation of a worthy monument, at all concerned in the fate of the *Constitution*. They were about to pass an act to rid themselves of her, when a young student of law, named Oliver Wendell Holmes, raised an effective protest. He had read in the newspapers the report of what was contemplated, and it disturbed him so profoundly and made him so angry that he sat down and wrote a poem about it. It is well worth reading, listen:

Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!  
Long has it waved on high,  
And many an eye has danced to see  
That banner in the sky;  
Beneath it rung the battle shout,  
And burst the cannon's roar;—  
The meteor of the ocean air  
Shall sweep the clouds no more.

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood,  
Where knelt the vanquished foe,  
When winds were hurrying o'er the flood,  
And waves were white below,  
No more shall feel the victor's tread,  
Or know the conquered knee;—  
The harpies of the shore shall pluck  
The eagle of the sea!

Oh better that her shattered hulk  
Should sink beneath the wave;  
Her thunders shook the mighty deep,  
And there should be her grave;  
Nail to the mast her holy flag,  
Set every threadbare sail,  
And give her to the god of storms,  
The lightning and the gale!

“Holmes called the poem ‘Old Ironsides’ and sent it to the *Boston Advertiser*, which published it. The news sheets of the whole country copied it. Immediately the Capital was besieged by citizens who wouldn’t have the *Constitution* demolished and said so loudly. She was their ship and they proposed to keep her intact. Protesting circulars and hand bills were scattered about as thick as snowflakes. Congress became aware that the voters were speaking, and promptly

found the money to preserve the ship. It was not the first time 'Old Ironsides' had been saved from ruthless destruction. On another occasion a sailor had intervened. This time it was a poet who rescued her.

"Meanwhile an appropriation had been made for a much needed dry dock. The *Constitution* was the first vessel to enter it. She was placed there on June 24, 1833; and the work of restoration began. Captain Isaac Hull was in charge of the job and when it was finished the old ship was almost as good as new. It was then decided to place a new figure-head under her bowsprit and this gave rise to a fine tempest in a teapot.

"Andrew Jackson was President at the time and upon a visit to Boston he had been so well received that anyone might have been excused for believing he was most popular with the people of New England. Captain Elliot, in command of the *Constitution*, decided that it would be a graceful gesture to model the new figurehead after the President. He made his suggestion to the Navy Department at Washington and was told to go ahead.

"Thinking to surprise as well as delight the citizens of Boston, Captain Elliot gave the order to a wood carver named Beecher, with instructions to keep the matter secret until the figure was finished and in place.

"Of course such proceedings do not remain a secret, and very shortly all the men, women and children in Massachusetts had learned of it; at least there was fuss enough made about it to involve the entire population; for by this time they had changed their minds about President Jackson. They didn't like him at all and they did not propose that his image should adorn the bows of the *Constitution*. What they said

about it would fill several large volumes, and they were at no pains to be polite. They called Captain Elliot every name they could think of. They threatened to tar and feather him. They declared he should be hanged or buried alive. No fate could be too awful for the man who had proposed such an outrage!

“Then the politicians took it up and made it a party issue; and those who hated Jackson, and there were evidently a good many, said what they thought of him in no mincing terms. It was an extremely violent exhibition of bad temper, and continued to be the chief topic of conversation among the people of Boston for many weeks.

“And the protestants had certain excellent arguments on their side. They claimed that it was in doubtful taste to put the effigy of a living President in such a position, more particularly as Jackson had won his fame as a soldier. They questioned the advisability of so honoring any one before he was dead; but if it were to be done, there were plenty of naval heroes much more worthy to grace the bow of ‘Old Ironsides.’ These were the main arguments against the plan, repeated again and again in the most violent and abusive language and directed especially against Captain Elliot, whom they were bent upon frightening into countermanding the order.

“A mistake was made in trying to bully the Captain. He was a stubborn person, somewhat arrogant, who didn’t frighten at all. He was a great admirer of General Jackson and took a personal interest in thus honoring the President. If the people of Boston didn’t like it they could rave as much as they pleased for all the good it would do them.

“They did more than rave. Mr. Beecher was offered a

considerable bribe to leave his shop door open one evening so that the unfinished figure might be quietly disposed of. This he refused to do, and reported the incident to Captain Elliot, by whose orders the work was transferred to the Navy Yard where it was placed under guard. In the spring of 1834 the figure was fitted to the bow of 'Old Ironsides' while the howl of protest continued unabated. Finally the threats became so menacing that the Captain placed the *Constituion* between two ships-of-the-line, stationed a marine guard at the bow, and defied the mob to do its worst.

"It happened that there was in the city a firm of ship owners, the brothers Henry and William Lincoln, and in their employ was Captain Samuel Dewey, who, at the moment, was waiting for his ship to be repaired and loaded for her next voyage. It was the Captain's custom to drop in to see his employers every day, and naturally the talk concerned itself to a great extent with the Jackson figurehead on the *Constitution*.

"'I'd give a hundred dollars to see it cut off,' said William half jokingly.

"'Really! As much as that?' inquired Dewey with a laugh.

"There was further bantering talk, which William Lincoln did not take seriously and soon forgot. Dewey, however was different. He was not very old and was a reckless sort of chap; so, after turning the matter over in his mind, he concluded that a good deal of fun might be had out of this idea besides the hundred dollars. He pictured to himself the surprised faces of his friends if he could put through a scheme that had occurred to him.

"He visited the Navy Yard and took a good look around.

He saw how the old ship was lying and where the sentries were stationed in her bows. Then he perfected his plan and waited for the weather, which had considerable to do with his chance of success in this adventure. It must be just right, and it was not until the 2d of July that the elements were suited to his purpose. There was a furious thunderstorm raging, noisy enough to drown any other sound, even if it were only a few feet away.

“Dewey had everything he needed ready in a boat,—a saw, a piece of rope and two gimlets. In the blackness of this stormy night, with the rain pouring down, he crossed the Charles River to the side of the *Constitution*. With his hands he worked his way to the bow, fastened his rowboat and climbed up to the figurehead. He began by screwing a gimlet on each side of the head, and to these he fastened a rope passed over the bowsprit to keep the severed head from splashing into the water. Then, while the thunder smothered the noise, he began to saw at the neck of the wooden image.

“Unfortunately for the neat job he wished to make, his first cut came down on an iron bolt used to fasten the head to the body, and he had to begin all over again. This time he sawed through the chin and soon severed the head. Quickly lowering it into the boat now half filled with water, he followed it and, after some hard work, returned to his starting place ashore with the fruit of his labor in a sack over his shoulder.

“There was fine todo when this mutilation was discovered. It was a most popular performance in Boston, and the authorities both there and in Washington treated it more or less as a joke. At first there were only a few people who knew

what had become of the head and who had done the deed. In time, however, it grew to be an open secret, and Dewey had achieved a certain fame. Six months later he actually gave the severed head back to the Secretary of the Navy and, although you would think some action should have been taken, nothing was done to punish the daring young man.

“Captain Elliot was the person most displeased, I suppose; but he was far from helpless. He took the *Constitution* to New York, and Mr. Beecher was commissioned to make another head; after which President Jackson’s wooden image adorned the bow of ‘Old Ironsides’ for forty years. It is now at the Naval Academy at Annapolis.

“Captain Elliot took the *Constitution* on a mission to France and returned in June, 1835. He was then ordered to the Mediterranean, where ‘Old Ironsides’ was once more the flag-ship of the squadron stationed in those waters. Here she remained for three years, not coming home until August, 1838, when she arrived at Hampton Roads with two hundred of her crew demanding their discharge, as their enlistment time was overdue. Captain Elliot was accused by them of unnecessary severity, and, being found guilty of this and other counts against him, he was suspended from the service for a time. Evidently he was not an easy gentleman to get along with, and it is certain that the people of Boston went the wrong way about it in trying to force their opinions upon him.

“The *Constitution*’s next commander was Captain Daniel Turner, who took her for a two years’ cruise in the Pacific. In such service as this, our ship went wandering about the world, visiting various ports and occasionally meeting old enemies who had changed to friends. On one such occasion

Commodore Chads, who had been a lieutenant on the *Java*, came aboard to talk things over with her Captain Percival, and to offer medical aid in combating an outbreak of sickness among the crew. There was much good feeling between the officers of the two navies, which has lasted throughout all the years since they fought in 1812.

"In October, 1848, the *Constitution* went out of commission, having sailed during this cruise over fifty thousand miles. Two years later she was once more the flag-ship of the Mediterranean squadron, and it was on this trip that a baby was born on her. He was the son of Consul General and Mrs. McCauley, and the baby was christened Constitution Stewart in honor of the old ship and one of her famous commanders.

"So it went until 1860, when the Navy Department sent the frigate to Annapolis for the use of the midshipmen. When the Civil War broke out she was towed to New York, and when the Naval Academy was moved to Newport she was taken there to serve as a training-ship. In 1871 she was sent to Philadelphia and there was another suggestion that she be condemned; but previous experience had taught Congress that it would not be wise to have her broken up. Once more the money was appropriated to replace her rotted timbers.

"She made a last trip to Europe in 1877 as cargo carrier of the American exhibits to the Universal Exposition of 1878 in Paris. On her return she went aground in British waters and His Majesty's Navy hurried to her rescue. They had some trouble in floating her again, but her ancient enemies spared no pains in aiding her.

"Upon her return to America, she was ordered into service as a training-ship for apprentice boys and went on short

cruises, south in winter and north in summer, until finally, at the end of 1881, she closed her active career by going out of commission in New York.

"The one hundredth anniversary of her launching saw her escorted back to Boston by the Atlantic Fleet and she was again placed in the first dry dock our Government ever erected. There she lies now, a fitting monument to the fine men whose devotion to our flag laid the foundation of the United States Navy."

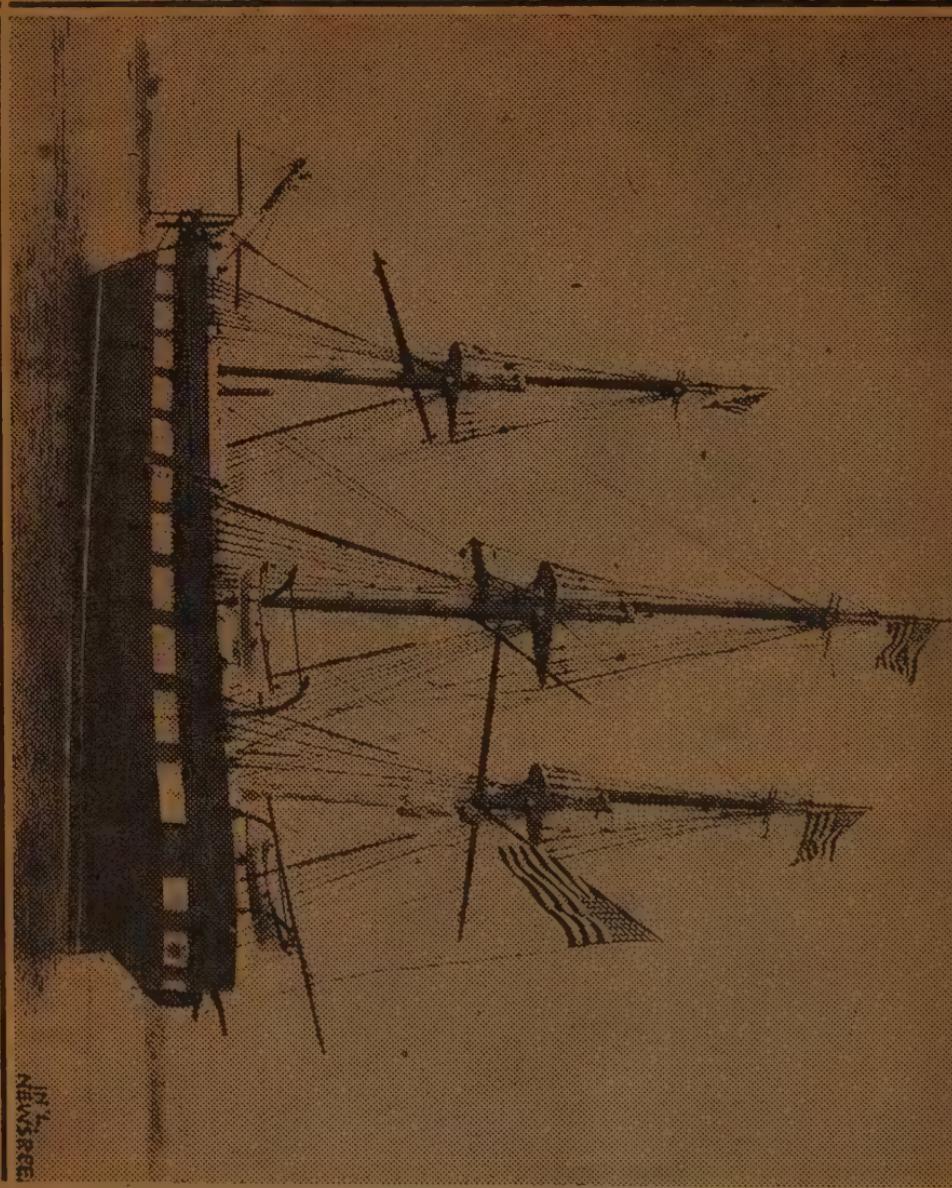
"And," exclaimed Joe, with enthusiasm, "when I have two good legs, I'm going to see her."

"You should," agreed Mr. Shepard, "and don't forget that she needs repairs. Congress decided that the people must do this by private subscription and authorized a Commission in charge of the work to accept donations for that purpose. Why so rich a Government should not bear this expense is difficult to understand. Perhaps we are in need of another Oliver Wendell Holmes to write a poem to stir us up. However 'Old Ironsides' will not perish. We shall all give what we can and follow the example of ten million children throughout the country who have already contributed their share."

THE END

The navy department plans to send the famous frigate, Constitution, "Old Ironsides" down the Atlantic coast in the near future and up the Mississippi as far as navigation will permit. It makes every possible stop to allow the children to see the ship, their pennies have saved for

The Constitution, which has been undergoing restoration in the Boston navy yard, is expected to be ready for the water again some time this month. The navy has spent \$477,873 in restoring the famous ship.



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## IRONSIDES READY FOR ROPE.

### Famous Old Frigate's Rigging Must Be Made by Hand.

From the Boston Globe.

After more than a century of continuous operation, during which many famous vessels have been fitted out with cordage, the ropewalk at the Charlestown Navy Yard is again called upon to play an important part. The famous old frigate Constitution, being rebuilt, is now ready for her lofty rigging and will require cordage such as probably no other rope manufactory is equipped to produce.

It is planned that Old Ironsides be equipped as she was originally and this means the use of tarred cordage, much of which must be tapered. Sheets and stays may be twice as thick at one end as the other and the rope-makers must resort to old-fashioned hand methods, as modern machines are not built to manufacture such cordage.

The cordage for the Constitution will be made of American-grown hemp, as it is impracticable to tar the better known Manila variety. Twenty years ago, when the ropewalk was called upon to furnish new rigging for the Constitution, Russian hemp was used, but this time hemp grown largely in Wisconsin will be used.

The capacity of the navy yard ropewalk is 30,000 pounds daily. During the late war production was increased to 100,000 pounds daily. All rope manufactured at the navy yard must undergo tests. Cordage  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch in diameter must sustain 4,500 pounds, the approximate requirement of 1843.

Machinery has greatly speeded up and eliminated many of the tedious features of rope manufacture. Despite the many intricate pieces of machinery used in the work, the ropewalk recently won the distinction of being the first department in the yard to receive for three successive months the yard's safety trophy, awarded for the best accident record.



